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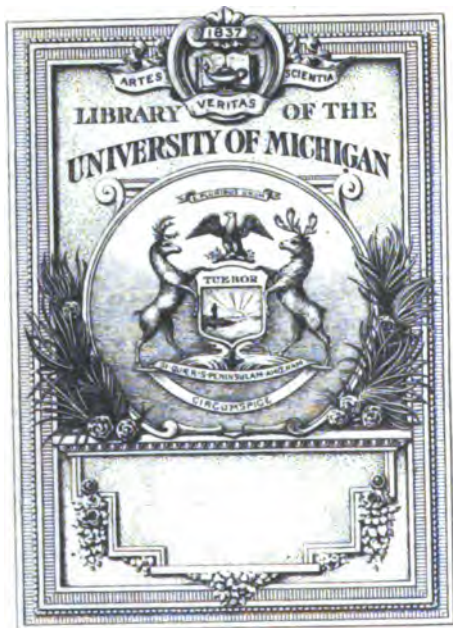
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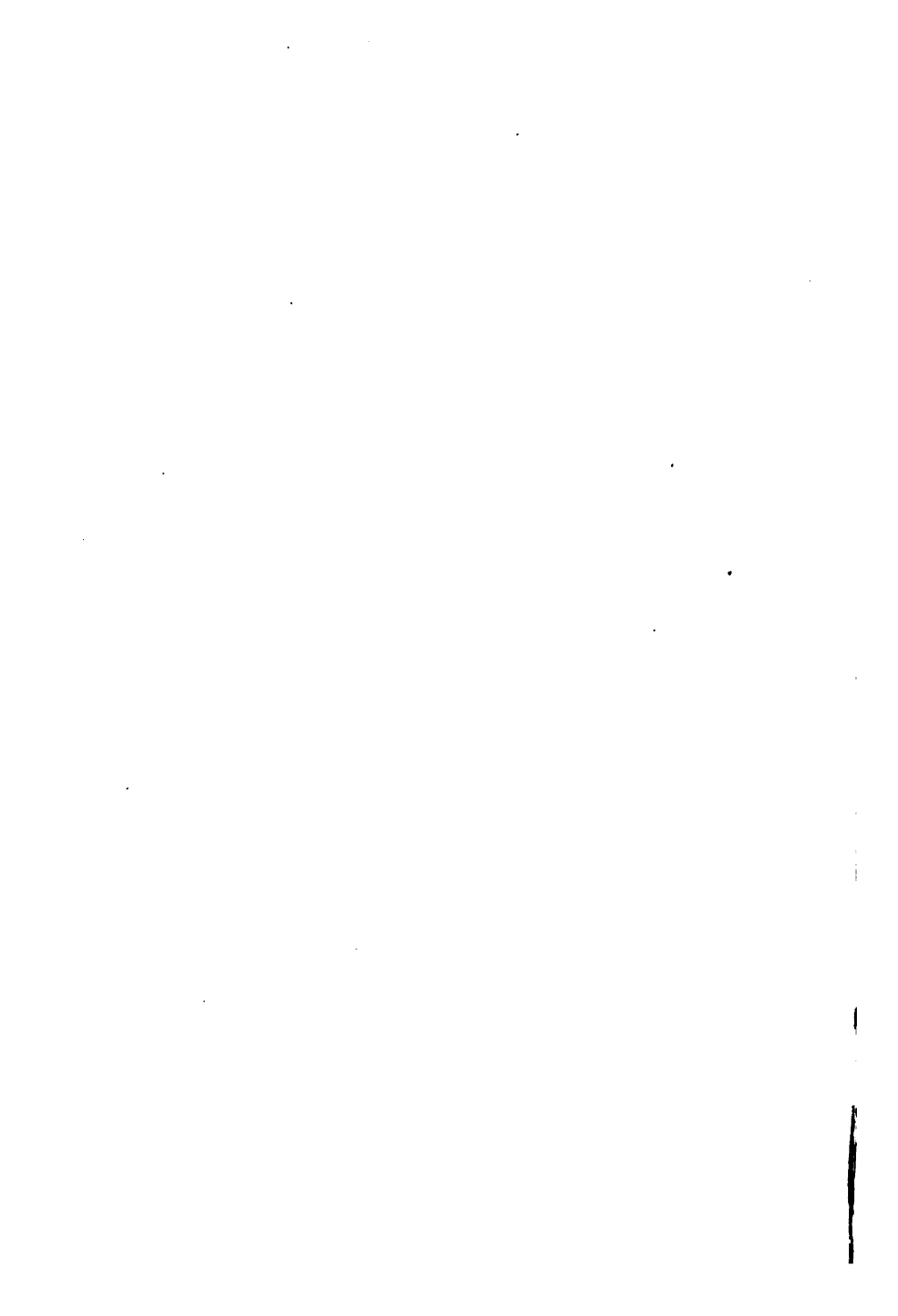
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**HENRY WARD BEECHER.**



11



Henry Wood Beecher



American Reformers Series

# Henry Ward Beecher

*The Shakespeare of the Pulpit*

BY

JOHN HENRY BARROWS

*Author of "The Gospels are True Histories," and "I Believe in God"*



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY  
NEW YORK and LONDON



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## To the Congregation

**Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, this Life of their First Pastor**

**Is Dedicated,**

**with Deep and Grateful Admiration of their Unswerving  
Devotion to Him in the Time of His Sorest Trials, and  
with an Equally Cordial Appreciation of their Noble Part  
in those Services to**

**Christ and Humanity,**

**which are Immortally Associated  
with the Name of**

**Henry Ward Beecher.**



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## To the Congregation

Wynmouth Church, Brooklyn, this Life of their First Pastor

Is Dedicated,

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Devotion to Him in the Time of His Sorest Trials, and  
with an Equally Cordial Appreciation of their Noble Part  
in those Services to

Christ and Humanity,

which are Immortally Associated  
with the Name of

Henry Ward Beecher.

The materials which I have found at hand, and which I have been kindly permitted by authors and publishers to use, have been exceedingly ample. The Rev. N. D. Hillis, D.D., of Evanston, Illinois, is the possessor of perhaps the completest Beecher library in the country, and this has been kindly placed at my service. Henry Ward Beecher had the fortune to have more things written about him than any other of his contemporaries, unless we except Lincoln and Gladstone.

No brief sketch is so satisfactory as that given by Mrs. Stowe in "Men of Our Times" (Hartford Publishing Company, 1868). In the "Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," by her son, Charles Edward Stowe (Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1889), are many notices of Henry Ward Beecher which are valuable to his biographer.

The "Life of Beecher," by Abbott and Halliday (American Publishing Company, Hartford, 1887), contains an important sketch of Mr. Beecher by Dr. Lyman Abbott, his successor in Plymouth pulpit and in the editorship of *The Christian Union*, now *The Outlook*. It contains also many reminiscences by Rev. S. B. Halliday, Mr. Beecher's beloved assistant in the pastoral work of Plymouth Church. This book, moreover, is valuable on account of the numerous contributions by distinguished contemporaries of the pulpit orator. I have made occasional use of these analyses and reminiscences, for the reason that Mr. Beecher can be adequately appreciated by those only who realize what a profound impression he made on various gifted minds. This life is also enriched by many of Mr. Beecher's characteristic utter-

ances, and contains a brief account of his closing years.

The chief storehouse of knowledge concerning this remarkable man is found in the "Biography of Henry Ward Beecher," by William C. Beecher and Rev. Samuel Scoville, assisted by Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher (Charles L. Webster & Company, 1888, now owned by Bromfield & Company). In the notes I refer to this book as the "Biography." It should be read by all who are interested to possess a full account of Mr. Beecher's life as seen by his own household. In the *Ladies' Home Journal* for 1891-2, Mrs. Beecher has furnished a series of pleasant papers on "Mr. Beecher as I Knew Him." They are full of interesting anecdotes, for a few of which I have been able to find room in this volume.

"The Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher," two volumes, edited by Charles Beecher (Harper & Brothers, 1865), must be carefully read by all who wish to understand what Mr. Beecher inherited from his remarkable ancestry.

In the Preface to "Patriotic Addresses," by Henry Ward Beecher (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1887), there is an admirable and discriminating review of Mr. Beecher's personality and influence in public affairs, by John R. Howard. The "Life of Henry Ward Beecher," by Joseph Howard, Jr., and "The Life and Work of Henry Ward Beecher," by Thomas W. Knox, contain miscellaneous information, not elsewhere found. "The History of Plymouth Church," by Noyes L. Thompson (New York: G. W. Carleton & Company, 1873), is not without use to the student of Mr. Beecher's life.

The "Beecher Memorial," compiled and edited by Edward W. Bok, gives a great number of contemporary tributes, some of which the writer has found of interest and value. Joseph Parker's "Eulogy" (New York: Bacheider & Company, 1887), is a magnificent tribute to the genius and character of his illustrious friend.

A chief source of our knowledge of Henry Ward Beecher is the books which he published, or which friends have compiled from his writings and addresses. Foremost among these I mention "The Yale Lectures on Preaching," which remain unsurpassed in suggestiveness and stimulating power; the "Lectures to Young Men," "Plymouth Pulpit Sermons," "Patriotic Addresses," containing the complete publication of Mr. Beecher's most important speeches on subjects connected with slavery and the Civil War; "Evolution and Religion," "Norwood," "Comforting Thoughts," "A Book of Prayer," "Royal Truths," "Beecher as a Humorist," "A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," "Bible Studies," all of them published by Fords, Howard & Hulbert, and two volumes of Mr. Beecher's sermons, edited by Lyman Abbott and published by Harper Brothers. The English publication of Mr. Beecher's sermons (London: R. D. Dickinson) has been placed at my service by the kindness of Dr. Hillis, and also the sermons delivered during the last year of his life and published in *The Brooklyn Magazine*.

Probably the most famous of the compilations from Mr. Beecher's works is "Life Thoughts," which had an extraordinary sale. An interesting selection from his writings is "The Crown of Life" (Boston:



D. Lothrop Company), with Introduction by Rossiter W. Raymond. This Introduction contains the best account ever given of some of the peculiarities of Mr. Beecher's mind, particularly its periodicity. Mr. Raymond explains how Mr. Beecher's fruitful genius remained dormant or inactive except at special recurring times, and how he brought about, with astonishing regularity, these periods of creative productiveness, which seldom lasted more than a few hours, but which he was usually able to make synchronous with his Sunday services.

Some of Mr. Beecher's very best writing is found in the "Star Papers," first and second series, and in "The Life of Jesus, the Christ," the first volume of which was published by J. B. Ford & Company, 1871, and the second by Bromfield & Company, 1891. The "Prayers from Plymouth Pulpit" (A. C. Armstrong & Son) must not be omitted by any student of Henry Ward Beecher.

There have been many other volumes, besides addresses, pamphlets, reviews, and newspaper articles which I have consulted, and which have thrown important side-lights on Mr. Beecher's career.

While a student in the Union Theological Seminary in 1868 and 1869, it was my good fortune to be a listener to his preaching, and in what I have written of his unsurpassed pulpit eloquence I have freely drawn on my own vivid recollections. Mr. T. J. Ellinwood, who for so many years reported Mr. Beecher's sermons, has very kindly sent me a number of Mr. Beecher's unpublished sentences. Mr. N. D. Pratt, of Chicago, a valued friend of Mr. Beecher, has very courteously allowed me the free use of his

unpublished reminiscences. A number of friends have furnished unpublished letters of interest and incidents connected with Mr. Beecher's remarkable personality.

"Biography," says Mr. Lowell, "in these communicative days has become so voluminous that it might seem calculated for the ninefold vitality of another domestic animal than for the less lavish allotment of man." I hope that this book will seem to many of the friends of Mr. Beecher too short rather than too long. If it shall be deemed by those who were personally familiar with him a truthful picture of this wonderful man, and if my estimate of his character and genius, and of the influence of his teaching, shall commend itself to the judgment of fair-minded Christian readers, I shall be greatly pleased. I shall be still more pleased if this account of a richly-gifted, heroic, and much-suffering servant of Christ, and apostle of humanity, shall kindle in other hearts a new faith in that Divine Redeemer, who was the strength and glory of Mr. Beecher's great career.

JOHN HENRY BARROWS.

CHICAGO, August 1st. 1893.

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# HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FLOWER OF NEW ENGLAND WOMANHOOD.

MORE than three-fourths of a century have rippled "into the silent hollows of the past" since, in the hamlet of Litchfield, Connecticut, when the morning twilight of September was awaking the bird-songs in the elm-trees, a saintly woman, the flower of New England, told her weeping companion that Heaven drew near, and that its glories were almost overwhelming to her soul. On her death-bed she dedicated her sons as missionaries of Christ, and her dying hope was fulfilled, as all of them became ministers of the Gospel. She told them that God could do for them more than she had done, and that they must put their trust in Him. In her last moments, her husband repeated to her the words, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that

speaketh better things than that of Abel." Then in perfect and cloudless peace she fell asleep.

Forty-seven years after the sods of Litchfield had closed over the dust of Roxana Foote Beecher, an old man, who had once been the king of the New England pulpit, but who had long been awaiting his departure, lay on his death-bed, in his house on Brooklyn Heights. Arousing from his death-torpor and kindling for a moment with the old electric fire, he cried out, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." And soon after this, a solemn and divine radiance illumined his venerable face, and he, too, had gone to the general assembly and church of the first-born and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

Roxana Foote and Lyman Beecher inherited the best qualities which have ever ripened on the fruitful soil of New England Puritanism, and they bequeathed to their greatest son, Henry Ward Beecher, a bodily vigor which excesses, unless they were excesses of cerebral excitation in public speaking, never impaired, a rollicking good nature which was like the summer sunshine playing over garden and field, a profound melancholy which led to occasional morbid estimates of himself, a genius, quick and powerful to discern the loftiest truths, a passionate devotion to God's children from the highest down to the lowliest of them all, a muscular and elastic intellect of prodigious creative power, a wit that flashed like the lightning through the clouds and was often accompanied by



thunder-blasts of righteous wrathfulness, and an imagination which transformed Heaven and earth into a radiant procession of pictures from which he selected at will.

Henry Ward Beecher was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, June 24, 1813. His father had preached in this town since 1810. He was the ninth child, and the eighth then living, of Lyman Beecher and his first wife, Roxana Foote. The new-born infant was named after his uncles Henry and Ward, and the names were given by the grandmother, Roxana Foote, who was with her daughter when he was born. Henry Ward Beecher was eleven years the senior of that other leading genius of New England theological reform, Horace Bushnell, who first saw the light in the same town.

His father and mother, as Joseph Parker has said, "were enough to account for any genius, for their spiritual life was purely aristocratic, and enough to account for any goodness, for they held much daily commerce with Heaven." Henry Ward Beecher, in a marked and unusual measure, was the child, not only of his parents, but also of his remote ancestors. There appears in his many-sided character and vast stores of physical and moral endurance scarcely a trait or force which may not be distinctly traced to some one of his known progenitors. Elisha Foote, the father of Roxana Foote, was a descendant from the Englishman who aided King Charles First to hide from his pursuers in the Royal Oak which grew in a field of clover. For this service he was knighted, and the coat-of-arms for the Foote family shows an oak-tree standing in a clover field.

Another of the ancestors of Roxana Foote was Andrew Ward, one of the English gentlemen who sailed with John Winthrop, Thomas Dudley, Sir Richard Saltonstall and the Rev. George Phillips in the good ship *Arbella*, which arrived in Boston on June 22, 1630. Among his descendants were Colonel Andrew Ward who helped in the capture of Louisburg and who was famed for his total abstinence principles, and General Andrew Ward, distinguished in the Revolutionary struggle, and who for many years was regularly and without opposition chosen to the State Legislature of Connecticut.

Henry Ward Beecher had the looks of his mother, as everyone will discern who studies the fine portrait of Roxana Foote which appears in the biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe written by her son. Not only is the general outline of the mother's face reproduced, but "the fine nose, the full eye, the mobile, sensitive mouth appear in both." We are told that after his mother's death, which occurred in 1816, little Henry was discovered under his sister Catherine's window digging with great zeal, and when asked what he was doing he replied, "Why, I am going to Heaven to find mamma."

No mother ever had sweeter things written of her by her children than the mother of Henry Ward Beecher. Catherine says of Roxana Foote that she had "a high ideal of excellence in whatever she attempted, and a habit of regarding all knowledge with reference to its practical usefulness, and remarkable perseverance." And Harriet writes of her mother that she was "a woman to make a deep impression on the minds of her children. There was a moral

force about her, a dignity of demeanor, and an air of elegance and superior breeding which produced a constant atmosphere of unconscious awe in the minds of little children." And, again, she writes that her "mother was one of those strong, restful, and yet widely sympathetic natures, in whom all around seemed to find comfort and repose. The communion between her and my father was a peculiar one; it was an intimacy throughout the whole range of their being. There was no person in whose decision he had greater confidence and faith; intellectually and morally he regarded her as the better and stronger portion of himself, and I remember hearing him say that after her death his first sensation was a sort of terror like that of a child suddenly shut out in the dark."

She died when Henry was little more than three years old, so that his recollections of this remarkable woman were shadowy. And yet Mrs. Stowe writes: "Although my mother's bodily presence disappeared from our circle, I think that the memory and example of her had more influence in molding her family than the living presence of many mothers." When Henry Ward Beecher, in September, 1831, found the correspondence between his father and mother, how eagerly he sought out her letters and read them. "O my mother, I could not help kissing the letters. I looked at the paper and thought that her hand had rested on it while writing it. The hand of my mother had formed every letter which I saw, she had looked upon that paper, she had folded it, she had sent it, and I found out more of her mind than I ever knew before, more of her feelings, her

piety."<sup>1</sup> And afterwards when he came to own a faded picture of a flower which his mother's hand had drawn and colored, it seemed to him the most precious art-product in the world.

Roxana Foote appears to have been, in her way, quite as remarkable as Lyman Beecher. Hers was a more refined, meditative, and imaginative nature. Like the New England housewives of her time she could do all the labors of the home, weaving, spinning and making the clothes, as well as skillfully preparing the food. She is said to have been an adept in needlework. She was well acquainted with literature, history, and French. She could use the pencil and the brush, and possessed some knowledge of music. Unlike Lyman Beecher, she was tall and beautiful. Her natural timidity was so great she was never able to lead the woman's weekly prayer-meeting. She came from a distinguished family, and, though of Puritan blood, she was early confirmed in the Protestant Episcopal Church, the communion of which her parents were members. It required some independence of character for her family, one part of it, to remain loyal to King George during the Revolutionary struggle.

She was a woman of patience and unselfishness, and her extraordinary resignation excited the amazement of her husband. Mrs. Stowe reports the tradition that she never spoke an angry word in her life. Henry Ward said of her, "There are few born to this world that are her equals." "From her I received my love of the beautiful, my poetic temperament." And

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 128.

he once declared that this imaginative temperament was responsible for a good deal of the heresy with which he was sometimes charged. From his mother Beecher believed that he also received simplicity and childlike faith in God. "My mother was an inspired woman who saw God in Nature as well as in the Book."

Is it any wonder that his ideal of woman was so lofty? His sister Catherine was a person of rare intellectual power and moral genius, who, out of her sorrow and study, evolved that conception of God which became the ruling conception in her brother's great ministry. His sister Harriet was a woman whom it is superfluous to praise, the author of one of the few epoch-making volumes in all literary history. His mother was to his affectionate remembrance an angel of light. He says, "I have only such a remembrance of her as you have of the clouds of ten years ago, faint, evanescent, and yet caught by imagination and fed by that which I have heard of her, and by what my father's thought and feeling of her were, it has come to be so much to me that no devout Catholic ever saw so much in the Virgin Mary as I have seen in my mother, who has been a presence to me ever since I can remember." One recalls the tribute which Theodore Parker paid to motherhood in his discourse on Daniel Webster: "When virtue leaps high in the public fountain, you seek for the lofty spring of nobleness and find it far off in the dear breast of some mother who melted the snows of winter and condensed the summer's dew into fair, sweet humanity, which now gladdens the face of man in all the city streets."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE KING OF THE NEW ENGLAND PULPIT.

**HENRY WARD BEECHER** was the son of his father, as well as of his mother, and his public speech, down to the last sermon of his life, abounded with eulogies of Lyman Beecher, who still retains, in the hearts of some older men now living, a place of reverent admiration and enthusiastic love never awarded to the son. This father of seven ministers, most of whom have been distinguished, was an inspiring teacher, friend, and guide, a man whose influence in New England surpassed Daniel Webster's in his prime. The more famous son differed from his father in so many respects that we are apt to overlook some striking resemblances. Both were men of the warmest affections. Dr. Beecher loved "old President Dwight of Yale College as his own soul." He was a man of magnetic eloquence, restless energy, and great evangelical fervor. He was singularly free from jealousy and selfishness. Few men were ever inspired with a more passionate love for Christ. Believing that the greatest thing in the world was to "save souls," he was peculiarly Pauline in the fiber of his nature, and appears to us at times like St. Augustine, with eyes turned upward, a pen in his left hand and a burning heart in his right.

Lyman Beecher treated his children to a surfeit of

theology, and thought of himself as a man born to fight error on the one side, and to readjust the explanation and defense of Calvinistic doctrine on the other. He was more of a theologian, technically speaking, than his son—at least he thought more and spoke more in the line of the theologies. He was himself a theological reformer, and the changes which he championed, and which his son pushed on into extremer manifestations, illustrate the saying of Dr. Holmes: "It is impossible for human nature to remain permanently shut up in the highest lock of Calvinism."

In both Lyman Beecher and his son appeared striking eccentricities of character. Both had a humorous way of looking at life and great frolicsomeness of disposition. The father was a dyspeptic. "From my earliest childhood," said Mr. Beecher in his Yale lectures, "I noticed the great watchfulness and skill with which he took care of himself." And this led Henry Ward to habitual thoughtfulness about his own health. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the father's trouble was dyspepsia, when we remember the state of the culinary art in New England in the early part of this century. Lyman Beecher writes: "We dined on salt pork, vegetables, and pies; corned beef, also, and always on Sunday a boiled Indian pudding. We made a stock of pies on Thanksgiving, froze them for winter use, and they lasted until March." There is a legend that on taking down the pantry of an old house in Connecticut, pies were found in perfect preservation, although the earthen dishes which had contained them had entirely decayed! It is possible that Henry Ward's occasional melancholy of spirits

may have been partly an inheritance from ancestors who had been improperly fed and whose pleasures were not the most wholesome and refined. Lyman Beecher relates what used to happen at the meetings of the Association of Ministers who dined at his Uncle Benton's: "As soon as Aunt Benton saw them coming she threw the irons in the fire and ran down cellar to draw a pail of beer. Then the hot irons were thrust in, hissing and foaming. It was sweetened and the flip was ready. Then came pipes, and in less than fifteen minutes you could not see across the room."

Although Lyman Beecher lived before anything American, except the Declaration of Independence, was likely to become cosmopolitan, he was in some respects second in influence only to his more famous son. As a preacher of the Gospel, in its commonly accepted sense, as a factor in the building of Christian institutions and as a revivalist, Lyman Beecher was superior to the pastor of Plymouth Church. But his training was more narrow, his intellectual furnishings far more limited. One of the famous scholars in the Faculty of Yale College used to speak of "the enormous illiteracy of Lyman Beecher," but this was probably only a rough way of asserting that the standard of literary culture has been immensely raised since Lyman Beecher pursued his student life in New Haven.

A few years after Andrew Ward had arrived in Boston, the widow Hannah Beecher with her son John, the first of the Beechers in New England, came to New Haven with the godly company who were the pioneers of John Davenport's important settlement. John Beecher was descended from the



sturdy Kentish yeomanry who made so deep an impression on English history "in the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth," and whom Charles Kingsley has celebrated in the brilliant and thrilling pages of "Westward Ho."

The Beechers were blacksmiths, and it is said that the anvil of Nathaniel and David Beecher stood upon the stump of the famous oak under whose boughs Davenport preached his first sermon to the New Haven colonists. One of Henry's great-grandfathers married a Roberts of Welsh blood, and he often gave the credit of his fervid imagination to his Welsh ancestry. It is amusing to read that his great-great-grandfather, the sturdy New Haven blacksmith, was strong enough to lift a barrel of cider and drink out of the bunghole; that his great-grandfather Joseph, was able to lift a barrel of cider into a cart, and that his grandfather, David Beecher, could lift a barrel of cider and carry it into the cellar. These were athletic feats which some Hosea Biglow might have celebrated in a rude New England Iliad, and have lifted into a fragment of the fame which belongs to the achievements of the muscular Ajax.

Physical strength was thus an inheritance with Henry Ward Beecher, although his father was exceedingly puny at first, and although Lyman Beecher's mother died with the consumption only two days after Lyman was born. As Henry Ward Beecher's grandfathers, David and Nathaniel, smote upon their anvils, they little dreamed that they were nurturing the strength in which an illustrious descendant was to strike at the most colossal and perilous iniquity that ever endangered America. Roger Sher-

man, the Connecticut statesman and signer of the Declaration of Independence, used to call frequently on David Beecher, Lyman's father, because he was fond of politics and a studious reader of the only newspaper published in New England. Sherman used to say that he "always calculated on seeing Mr. Beecher as soon as he got home from Congress to talk over the particulars." David was more careless in his dress than his son or grandson. Henry Ward's Aunt Esther said that she had known him at least a dozen times to come in from the barn and sit down on a coat-pocket full of eggs, and jump up and say, "O wife!"

Like Henry Ward he was fond of pets, and like him he suffered acutely from hypochondria, though not from the same causes. The grandfather was a dyspeptic, and would pass suddenly from hilarity to intense mental distress. David Beecher was five times married. Lyman Beecher was thrice married—in 1799, 1817, and 1836—and was the father of thirteen children of whom eleven survived him.

It will thus be seen that Henry Ward Beecher's inheritance was rich and manifold. From father and mother both came strong, distinctive qualities. He belonged to a race which appears to have the instinct for reform. His ancestors who left England were Come-outers, so that he seems to have been a reformer from heredity, unlike Wendell Phillips, whose immediate ancestors were conservative and aristocratic, and unlike Charles Sumner, "who was built apparently to play the part of a sovereign and an aristocrat," but who filled "the office of nurse to the slave child." Lyman Beecher was born to preach; that is,

he had that combination of energy, fervent emotiveness, and logical power which makes the effective preacher; and he was also a reformer, that is, as he said, "when I saw a rattlesnake in my path I killed it." Neither father nor son went out of his way, like some of the radical and far-seeing reformers of our time, to hunt rattlesnakes. But neither of these men ever turned aside from the venomous beasts which they encountered.

In Lyman Beecher there was something of the catholic spirit which his son developed into such cosmical proportions. He preached for eleven years in East Hampton, on Long Island. When a Methodist preacher came into that village by the Sound, which was Lyman Beecher's first parish, and expected, by his fervent evangelism, to make an inroad upon the staid Presbyterian congregation of the place, the officers of the Church were sorely alarmed by his advent. But Lyman Beecher decided to act with vigorous friendliness in this matter, and went directly to the house where the itinerant preacher lodged, gave him the heartiest welcome, an unusual act of courtesy in those days of intense denominationalism, and insisted on his preaching in the village church. This he did without making any very deep impression. The first sermon was the last.

Lyman Beecher said of himself: "I was made for action, the Lord drove me on, but I was ready. I have always been going at full speed." There were times when this was preëminently true of Henry Ward Beecher, but, fortunately for the world, he had in his nature an element of reposefulness, not to say of apparent physical indolence, by which his life was

prolonged in spite of the tremendous excitements which he underwent and the even more wearing trials which came to him in the height of his fame. Lyman Beecher thought that the law and the doctrine, without any accompanying explanations, were a rude and cruel way of getting souls into the Kingdom. He had firm confidence in his own power to elucidate the mysteries of Scripture and experience, and to adapt Biblical truth to the varying wants of individual souls. He even believed that if Lord Byron could have had the advantage of his personal explanations of truth, that acrid and erratic son of genius might have been guided into brighter and better paths. One of Lyman Beecher's peculiarities was this, that he was almost intoxicated by the crash and roar of thunder. It is uncertain whether thunder produced any powerful effect on Henry Ward Beecher, but he was fond of making it himself, and Dr. Richard S. Storrs says of him that he wasted enough breath in unnecessary noise during his public speaking to make two or three good sized thunder-storms! In the sturdy frame of Henry Ward Beecher, when under the greatest excitement, there was a titanic strength of emotion, an emotion more volcanic than his father's, which made him indeed the Jupiter of the pulpit and the worthy successor of those ancient orators of Athens,

"Whose resistless eloquence  
Wielded at will that fierce democracy,  
Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece,  
To Macedon and Artaxerxes's throne."

New England children, at the beginning of this

century and earlier, were permitted to play on Sunday evening as soon as they could see three stars. Lyman Beecher relates that playing one Sunday evening, he was too impatient to wait for the three lights in the heaven, and when one of his boy friends saw him and said "That's wicked, there aint three stars," he replied, "Don't care." "God says you mustn't." "Don't care." "He'll punish you." "Well if He does I'll tell Aunt Benton." "Well He's bigger than Aunt Benton and He'll put you in the fire and burn you up for ever and for ever." And Lyman Beecher relates that this took hold of him. He understood what fire was and what for ever was. "What emotion I had, thinking, no end, no end! It's been a sort of mainspring ever since." This incident will show what an enormous change has come over the prevailing orthodox preaching of our time. Endlessness of suffering was, with Henry Ward Beecher, subordinate to the infinity of God's love as an incentive to accept the Gospel and as a mainspring of Christian activity.

The great modern apostle of love, who was also the greatest American preacher of righteousness, came into the world on the day which honors St. John the Baptist, who made Herod and the Pharisees tremble. The ten years of American history extending from 1805 to 1815 witnessed the births of a group of men and women foreordained to become illustrious in the great anti-slavery struggle, or in that Civil War "which bound the Union and unbound the slave." Garrison was born in 1805, John G. Whittier and Robert E. Lee in 1807, Salmon P. Chase and Jefferson Davis in 1808, Abraham Lincoln in 1809, Theodore

Parker in 1810, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, Horace Greeley and Harriet Beecher in 1811, Alexander Stephens in 1812, Henry Ward Beecher in 1813, and Edwin M. Stanton in 1814. Some curious and prophetic angel might have made, during the consulates of Jefferson and Madison, a most interesting collection of children, destined to immortal celebrity in American annals, but probably no human eyes could have foreseen the momentous struggle, both moral and military, in which these children were destined to act such various and conspicuous parts. Few of these were foreordained to lives so interesting and commandingly influential, over both political and religious developments, as Henry Ward Beecher.

We may sum up the account and record of ancestral influences by noting the fact that he seemed to be a compound of opposite characteristics. The most earnest was the most playful of men; the most cheerful was at times the most despondent; the most devoted and unselfish was occasionally stiffly independent. Though possessing many of the elements of conservatism, like Milton and Lowell, though loving the retirement of Nature, the companionship of books and long periods of quiet observation and meditation, he had all the strongest instincts of the reformer and was the flaming Jupiter of American anti-slavery orators. Along many lines of vitality he inherited all the chief characteristics of the English-speaking race in every one of its branches. He had not only the blood of Wales with its fervid intensity, he had also an inheritance of Scottish blood, and there was in him the marvelous persistency and a determination to carry every undertaking through

to success which is supposed to be distinctly an English trait. The Puritan and the Cavalier were both in his veins and in his mind. With playfulness and domesticity of spirit was conjoined a grave and all-absorbing earnestness. The Shakespeare of the pulpit was an enthusiastic student of the prose and poetry of Milton, from the reading of whom he fashioned, to a certain degree, his nobler style in the greater passages of his eloquence. He belongs, and will ultimately be seen to belong, to the English race in all the continents.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE NURSE OF HIS CHILDHOOD.

DURING the sixteen years in which Dr. Beecher preached at Litchfield he became one of the foremost men of New England. And while this indefatigable teacher of righteousness was delivering great sermons against Intemperance, or on the Building up of the Waste Places, thereby setting in motion reforms whose current is sweeping us forward to-day, Henry Ward Beecher was finding Litchfield the rough and wholesome nurse of his childhood.

There is something pathetic and almost melancholy in the changes which have come over many of the smaller towns of New England. Professor Park has written, in his recollections of Dr. Emmons, of this pensive interest which has been "thrown over the places which have been distinguished as the residence of our ablest divines. Most of them are rural villages, where the stillness of the Sabbath reigns from day to day, and where but few relics remain of the greatness which has left them. Formerly they were the seats of the oracle. The voice which went out from these retired villages was heard and obeyed in our own land and in Britain. But now the scepter has departed from these churches, and the lawgiver from among them, and grass has grown up in the paths once trod by the masters in our Israel."



Litchfield, however, will always be interesting as the town where Lyman Beecher preached the Gospel with such life-giving power, and as the birthplace of his two most famous children. Like Bethlehem, it is in the hill country, a mountain town, a thousand feet above the level of the ocean. Beautiful and delightful in the summer, it is made dreadful through the long winter with ice and snow and cold. "This portion of vertebrate New England is so roundly covered with strong soil, so veined with well-fed water-courses, and clothed upon with rich verdure, that its wild beauty is redeemed from all harshness. The very air breathes vigor and purity."<sup>1</sup>

To know the springs of American civilization we must know the New England town, and Litchfield is one of the best examples of that chiefest of American institutions. It is said of the people of this region that they were unusually enterprising. "They made good turnpike roads; opened schools and academies; started manufactures, and made their law-school a prominent seat of constitutional training whence came some of the best lawyers of the country." During the Revolutionary war the town had been distinguished for its patriotism, and, like Washington at Mount Vernon, it sent contributions to beleaguered Boston in the solemn times of the Port Bill. It had the honor of molding into forty thousand bullets the statue of George the Third, which had been carried from Bowling Green in New York to this mountain village.

When Henry Ward Beecher revisited Litchfield, in his forty-fourth year, he recalled most vividly the early days and scenes. Some of the old

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<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell," pp. 3-4.

houses were still standing, the old store, the bank, and the jail; and there were the old familiar trees; and the names of the residents along the chief streets were not forgotten. And we think of some of the scenes which he has portrayed in "Norwood," when he speaks of the greatest man in town, who owned the stables, and of the wittiest, who was the stage-driver. "In that temple which boys' imagination makes, a stage-proprietor and stage-driver stand forth as grand as Minerva in the Parthenon of true piety and devotion to the highest things!"

Litchfield was a good town for such a boy to be born in, and Henry Ward was always thankful that the early measuring lines of life had fallen to him in such delightful places, where the society was of no mean order, where the law-school and the boarding-school gave some little intellectual dignity to the community, and where his early environment was such that he did not become acquainted in a practical way with wickedness. It is worth remembering that he records his youthful unsulliedness, and that he grew up pure as a woman. The moral atmosphere of Litchfield must have been far more wholesome and invigorating than that of many other New England towns. We know that Professor Phelps recorded his protest against the vulgarity of the average country-district school. "The innocence of rural life was not illustrated in my early surroundings. I never found afterwards in colleges or in cities such corrupting or vulgarizing influences."

They are pleasant pictures which have been given us of Henry Ward Beecher's early life. We find him a

healthy-minded, interesting, thoroughly boyish, and affectionate boy, humiliated, like many other boys, when compelled to wear an overcoat on coldest days. We see him, when only nine years old, harnessing the horse to the sled and taking great pride, on a wintry day, in bringing home a barrel of water from an icy brook three miles distant. The disposition to do hard things and take great comfort in them was a family trait.

Henry Ward's mother died when he was three. Mrs. Stowe writes that Henry was too small to go to the funeral, and she remembers his golden curls and little black frock as he frolicked in the sun. In the autumn of 1817, Lyman Beecher brought to the Litchfield parsonage, as his second wife, Miss Harriet Porter, of Portland, Maine. The coming of the second mother was of course a memorable event in the household, and fortunately not one which brought with it a shadow. The new mother's heart was at once drawn out to the children, who seemed to her amiable and bright and also possessed of fine capacities and good taste for learning. This was certainly true of William, Edward, Catherine, and George, and the younger children appeared to her lovely and affectionate. But the second mother, while serene, beautiful and accomplished, was one who inspired awe in view of her goodness, rather than cheerful and enthusiastic love. Young Henry was disposed to shrink from her as being a saint of whose affection little transgressors were unworthy. He has left numerous praises of her fidelity, and has spoken strongly of the deep impression she made upon him; but he could not open his young heart to her in fullest confidence. Referring to

his devotions with her, he said: "I always felt when I went to prayer as though I was going into a crypt where the sun was not allowed to come, and I shrank from it." She did not represent that kind of Christian experience which was to open his heart to the glory and beauty of religion.

But other influences, more helpful, were brought to bear upon his awakening thought. Old Aunt Esther, with her numberless stories and her wonderful readings from the Bible, was a radiant and cheerful presence in the young boy's life and also in his after recollections of childhood. When an old man Mr. Beecher spoke most tenderly of her great influence over him, and, with tears rolling down his cheeks, he read to his family the matchless, immortal story of Joseph, as she was accustomed to read it in the old, old days when he lived his young life of mirth and melancholy in the gloomy parsonage of Litchfield. This experience was not solitary and peculiar. Hugh Miller recalls how his mind was awakened by that most delightful of all narratives, the history of Joseph, which showed him that "the art of reading was the art of finding stories in books."

Mr. Beecher has often spoken of the colored man who was a laborer on his father's farm, the Charles Smith in whose room he slept and whose joyful piety made upon his heart such a lasting impression. From him he learned in some measure what may be the overflowing gladness and thanksgiving of prayer. And more even than from his father he learned from this man, as he saw him reading from his Bible, while he talked about it to himself and to his God, what it is to rejoice con-

tinually and heartily in the Lord. In a remarkably luminous analysis of the distinctive types of religious character which shaped Beecher's boyhood, Rev. Frank S. Child of Fairfield, Connecticut, has shown that Mr. Beecher's mother stands for the *spiritual* in religious life, that the stepmother stands for the *disciplinary*, that the colored servant stands for the *practical*, and that Lyman Beecher stands for the *intellectual*. Added to all this was the great impersonal service of Nature.

While his second mother, a woman of great intelligence and unyielding conscientiousness, was accustomed to show the children their faults and to pray for them and to insist upon cheerful and immediate obedience, the father introduced into the family life a large degree of playfulness. "The great barn of a structure, the rooms scattered about here and there," for such was the Litchfield parsonage, was a home where Dr. Beecher was wont to frolic and play all sorts of pranks with his children. It is true that the frolicsome divine sometimes held the rod in his hand, and made his children feel that he suffered more than they did when he was compelled to use it, but Henry, and his brother Charles, who was his daily companion in his early years, were not often "switched." Unlimited amounts of fun came into their lives; the only work required was in helping to take care of the garden and the house, and carrying in and piling up the wood. When summer time with its innumerable delights arrived the father was accustomed to carry them off with him on fishing-parties to the little neighboring pond, and they talked theology on the way and held good-natured discussions on the greatest and smallest themes.

Far from accurate is the remark of the least wise and careful of American infidels that "Henry Ward Beecher was born in a Puritan penitentiary of which his father was one of the wardens" and that "the natural desires ungratified, the laughter suppressed, the logic browbeaten by authority, the humor frozen by fear of many generations, were in this child!" Harriet Beecher thought her child-life happy, and probably there was never an American home in which freer play was given to the emotions, or where humor and hilarity were more continually manifested than in the home of Lyman Beecher. In his mature life he said: "There is not a place in the old Litchfield house where I was born that is not dear to my eye, and my heart blessed the old house for all that it had in it; for all the care it had had, for all its sweet associations. It was stained through with soul color. It was full, as it were, with the blood of life."<sup>1</sup>

The presence of boarders in the great house helped out the meager salary of eight hundred dollars a year on which Lyman Beecher, patriarch as well as apostle, was to feed, clothe, and educate the most remarkable and "brainy" lot of children that ever came to an American family. There were also frequent parties in the Litchfield manse, and the piano was always going and songs daily sounded from the parlor windows of this "Puritan penitentiary."

Henry Ward has written much of the deepest shadow which brooded over his childhood, the Catechism, which he could not learn, and he said some extravagantly abusive things of that marvelous

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<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., p. 251.

abridgment of doctrine, the learning of which was bone and muscle to many of the sturdier and stronger minds of New England. In an address made before the London Congregational Board in 1886, Beecher said : " I went through all the colic and anguish of hyper-Calvinism when I was quite young. Happily my constitution was strong. I regard the old hyper-Calvinism as the making of as strong minds as are ever met on the face of this earth, but I think it kills five hundred where it makes one." "When I was a boy eight years old and upwards, I knew as much about decrees, foreordination, election, reprobation, as you do now. I used to be under a murky atmosphere, and I said to myself, 'O! if I could only repent, then I should have a Saviour.'"

But though Mr. Beecher was always exaggerating, because he felt so deeply, the unfortunate influences which were ill-adapted to his own case, he gratefully remembered what his father's disposition and character wrought for his early training. He was greatly impressed by his father's self-restraint under provocation, and he recalls how Dr. Beecher permitted a man of violent temper to scold him to his heart's content, and then, asking the privilege of saying a word in reply, he answered his violent critic so thoroughly as to entirely change his mind. Henry was greatly influenced by the unshrinking courage of the father in trying circumstances. Dr. Beecher acted on the principle that if a thing were difficult of doing, that was the reason why he should do it ; and his father's pluck was often an incentive which greatly helped the son during the severe trials of his Western ministry.

When ten years of age Henry's appearance, as described by his sister Harriet, was that of a stocky, strong boy, dutiful, unquestioningly obedient, accustomed to patient work, and inured to hearing and discussing the great problems of Calvinism. There was great freedom and independence permitted in Dr. Beecher's "penitentiary." The father was too busy with preaching and the mother too busy with her children to give any one child great attention. "The uncaressing, let-alone system" doubtless helped to those habits of self-reliance for which all the Beechers were distinguished. But, while Henry's early development was marked in the ways already noted, there is a certain barrenness in his childhood which must be felt by those who reflect how many appliances are now used to make children happy. Thanksgiving was the chief holiday, and that was marked as a day of excessive feeding. The delights of Christmas and New Year's time were not known, nor the more refined festivities which accompany the Easter rejoicings in our Churches. The absence of toys and gifts and choice children's literature from those early days has been noted. It is probable that the children of a well-to-do American family receive, at a single Christmas-time, more good literature than ever came into the hands of the young Beechers at Litchfield.

But little was made of children in those days; they were personally insignificant compared with the boys and girls who rule our households now; and, in the case of Henry Ward Beecher, there was added the pain which springs from bashfulness, sensitiveness, and from indistinct speech. His Aunt



said: "When Henry is sent to me with a message, I always have to make him say it three times. The first time I have no manner of an idea any more than if he spoke Choctaw; the second, I catch now and then a word; and the third time, I begin to understand." The time was to come when Henry Ward Beecher was to speak with no uncertain sound, and when the whole English-speaking world was to hear!

## CHAPTER IV.

### "THE FATHER OF THE MAN."

HENRY WARD BEECHER began going to school when he was only four years of age. He used to walk to Ma'am Kilbourn's school with his sister Harriet, and, when there, would sit daily on the bench, kicking his heels in weary idleness and saying over the dreary letters twice a day. Still he was out of the way, and, with people as busy as the Beechers, this meant a great deal. Mrs. Stowe writes:<sup>1</sup> "He was my two years junior, and nearest companion out of seven brothers and three sisters. I taught him drawing and heard his Latin lessons." He was never a promising learner of lessons, and his first school, where the hours went slowly by and where the big girls sawed off with tin shears some of his long golden curls, was not a youthful paradise.

From this school he went to the district schoolhouse, where the exercises were daily readings from the Bible and the *Columbian Orator*, with "sums" from the *Elementary Arithmetic* and the practice of handwriting. The switch and the ferule were a part of the teacher's armory, but they gave no such misery as the long

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to George Elliot ("The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," p. 475).

weariness and agony of the constant effort to keep still.

Mr. Beecher has given a picturesque description of the district schoolhouse, the small, square pine building, blazing in the sun, with a huge pile of wood before it in the winter and piles of chips in the summer. We cannot withhold our sympathy from the boy whose restless legs kept swinging under the seat, and we can almost hear the voice of the master, when, bringing his hickory ferule down on the desk, he roars out "Silence." We hear the occasional laugh and the not infrequent slap, and we realize some of the beneficent changes which have made the school-rooms to-day delightful to many, if not to most, of our children. Mr. Beecher tells us that he and his fellow sufferers felt thankful to every meadow-lark which came into sight, and envied the flies more than anything else, unless it were the birds which were glimpsed through the open windows.

Henry's progress was not satisfactory. His backwardness was due not so much to his lack of verbal memory or to any mental dullness, as to the methods of teaching which then prevailed. He was taken to Mr. Brace's select school in Litchfield for one year, and then, when ten years of age, was sent to the school of the Rev. Mr. Langdon in the town of Bethlehem a few miles away. He remained there only a year, having acquired from his early experiences a distaste for school-life and for prescribed study. But he had splendid opportunities for roaming through field and wood, even though he made but slight progress in his books and was a wretchedly bad speller and even "cribbed" his Latin recitations. He

studied Nature with a gun over his shoulder, even though he made but little advancement in learning the tongue of the military masters of the ancient world.

Though he had no pleasant recollections of his earlier school-days, we find it agreeable to recall his first theological battle. At the private school in Bethlehem one of the schoolboys, older than most of them, paraded the objections to the Bible which he had drawn from the reading of Paine's "Age of Reason." But Henry Ward, believing that he was wrong, replied to him thoroughly. After making careful preparation by the study of Watson's "Apology," he challenged the big boy to a discussion, and by the acclamations of his schoolfellows he was hailed as victor in the debate.

Four schools had now been tried with indifferent success. It was thought wise by his persevering parents to try also the fifth. Henry was sent to Hartford, where his oldest sister Catherine was teaching. He tarried there only six months, having gained considerable distinction as a small specimen of perpetual motion. He also won repute by his remarkable ability in giving provokingly funny or deliberately wrong answers. He returned home with the reputation of being a poor scholar, a great joker, and a boy who had much within him that might yet be developed.

While the outer manifestations of his life up to this time were those of an irrepressible, effervescent and fun-loving boy, there was beneath all a poetic, yearning, and even melancholy spirit. In this respect the child was conspicuously "the father of the man." This growing, healthy, hungry, curious-minded,

prankish boy, who fondly loved the good things which Nature furnished in winter and summer, found his best schooling out of doors. Throughout his life he had great sympathy with the sentiment expressed in Lowell's lines :

"Merely to bask and ripen is sometimes  
 The student's wiser business; the brain  
 That forages all climes to line its cells,  
 Ranging both worlds on lightest wings of wish,  
 Will not distil the juices it has sucked  
 To the sweet substance of pellucid thought,  
 Except for him who hath the secret learned  
 To mix his blood with sunshine, and to take  
 The winds into his pulses."

Though dull at first to ordinary book-knowledge, the clouds and the elms, the birds and the ponds and the trout-streams found Henry a good scholar. He knew where to see the squirrels and find the sweet-flag, the sassafras bushes, the chestnuts, and the hickories. His attachment to old Litchfield was mainly an attachment to what Nature showed to him there. He loved the hills and the majestic trees which the storms beat upon fiercely through the long, cold winter and gently caressed in the warm summer days. And Litchfield was a wholesome and breezy height for a strong boy's early experiences. What he saw and felt and dreamed and did was a prophecy of his own wholesome, many-sided, unconventional, and far-reaching life. "His strong, tireless, responsible, magnificent physique dates its notable beginning to the air, sunshine, freedom, and healthfulness of the Litchfield hill-tops."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Frank S. Child's "Boyhood of Beecher," p. 29.

"With the innocent abandon of childhood, he flung himself upon the bosom of Mother Nature, and drew priceless inspiration from her love-work. And seasons mattered little to the observant child of Nature. The wild storms of December made their own strange revelations to his awakened fancy. The crystal snow-flake and the glittering icicle turned him into keen inquisitor. The rough usage of the winds, when they wrestled with him amid the snow-drifts, schooled him into rugged endurance. He heard strange voices through the storms—he caught the dissolving pictures of shy faces in the frost-work. The besparkled trees of February thaw—the myriad-colored forests of October—the delicate greens of the nascent leaves in May-time—they were all cherished by this devotee of Nature, and their suggestiveness had large share in fashioning the current of his thought."<sup>1</sup>

But the chief facts of all life reach down to those deep verities on which religion is built. That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and yet into these early days came serious and lasting impressions. In 1817, his stepmother wrote: "Our religious privileges are very great. Church meetings are interesting, and our domestic worship very delightful. We sing a good deal, and have reading aloud as much as we can."<sup>2</sup> Rev. Thomas K. Beecher records that the family prayers propagated the ancestral religion in his brother, though they failed to hand down the ancestral theology.<sup>3</sup> Henry had a

<sup>1</sup> "Boyhood of Beecher," p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> "Autobiography of Lyman Beecher," Vol. I., p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> "Biography," p. 91.

sensitive conscience, and when, in anger, he once uttered a profane oath, he was so deeply impressed with his guilt that he believed his soul was lost for ever. When his stepmother heard the bell tolling the death of some villager, she said, "Henry, what do you think when you hear that?" "I think, was that soul prepared? It has gone to eternity." Beecher, the man, did not believe that he was greatly guilty for the small sins of childhood; and religion came to him not so much through an experience or consciousness of sin, as through the bright revelation of heavenly love.

Sunday was not altogether a cheerful day in his early life. The coming on of Saturday night was a serious thing. It appeared to him that the frogs croaked more dismally then. Every kind of work had to be finished before Sunday dawned. The children must be made clean and the boys' Sunday pockets purged of such temptations as knives, marbles, and fish-hooks. Beecher was not always consistent in his memories of early impressions; and doubtless those impressions were twofold, and both sides of them were vivid in his mind. "I admire Sunday, I admire the old Jewish Sabbath, and I think New England owes much to it. One of the sweetest of my reminiscences is that of the old breezy hilltop in Litchfield on Sunday; of the Sunday sun, and the Sunday birds, and the Sunday shimmering Mount Tom, and the Sunday elm-trees, and the Sunday scenes, some of which were touching and some ludicrous. As I recall it Sunday was a great moral power."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. III., p. 232.

If we would know his full thought of the New England rest-day and its wonderful influence over his early life, we must recall what he says of it in "Norwood." "It is worth all the inconveniences arising from the occasional over-action of New England Sabbath observance to obtain the full flavor of the New England Sunday. But for this, one should have been born there; should have found Sunday already waiting for him." "Over all the town rested the Lord's peace. The saw was ripping away yesterday in the carpenter-shop and the hammer was noisy enough. To-day there is not a sign of life there. The anvil makes no music to-day, the mill is silent, only the brook continues noisy. In yonder pine woods what a cawing of crows! Sunday is the birds' day, and they will have their own democratic worship."

But Sunday hours in church were not altogether cheerful with him; his animal spirits were too vigorous to be easily or perfectly restrained, and the preaching availed him but little until after he was fifteen years old. And yet he says that "it did its work upon the imagination if not upon the reason." When he was twelve years of age there sprang up a revival in Litchfield, in the progress of which the famous Mr. Nettleton assisted Lyman Beecher. Henry's mind did not easily open to the religious teaching then prevalent and popular, and no deep impressions appear to have been made upon him although he was disposed to serious thought. He got hold of some things in the services which he attended, and truth, especially in its speculative parts, was lodged in his mind. Though he had no vices, he came at last, like many other persons under simi-



lar training, to think himself a great sinner and he imagined that he was not "elected."

Greatly moved by the tolling of the bell which announced the funeral of a companion, he needed such quieting and encouraging influence as a wise and sympathetic Christian, like his own mother, might have given him. He did not think, in later years, that the mercy of God was preached to him in his youth. He supposed he was writhing under sin, and he thought he was *on the way toward conversion*. As yet, however, he knew not God as the all-loving Father who loved the sinner in spite of his sin. "He is thus early groping, unresting, and unsatisfied; but it is among mountains and not in marshes and quicksands. Some day these mountain truths, among which he now wanders in darkness, shall be radiant in his sight with divine compassion, and his gloom shall give place to abiding love, joy, and peace."<sup>1</sup> He thought that a converted sinner might be saved, but for a "poor, miserable, faulty boy that pouted, and got mad at his brothers and sisters and did a great many naughty things there was no salvation." A new and greater world, however, and new and larger experiences were about to dawn on his unfolding life.

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 81.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BOY'S PERIL AND ESCAPE.

THE great Unitarian controversy was raging in New England. The old Churches in Eastern Massachusetts had been torn from their foundations. Harvard College was in the possession of the Unitarians. The American Unitarian Association was formed in 1825. There was crying need that Dr. Lyman Beecher, the most eloquent orthodox minister of his time, should leave his Litchfield parsonage for the strife and turmoil of Boston, where the bones of the Puritan Fathers rested and "where the crown had been torn from the brow of Jesus." A champion, able to meet the forces of theological error, was required in the very thick of that momentous battle. Therefore, in 1826, Dr. Beecher accepted an invitation to become pastor of the Hanover Street Congregational Church at the North End of Boston. There he flamed forth for six years and a half. During four of these years his scholarly son, Edward, was in the famous Park Street Church.

Lyman Beecher had a great following in the Puritan metropolis. He did not slay and exterminate heresy, and Theodore Parker did not root up or pull down New England orthodoxy. But Lyman Beecher was a great bulwark in defense of evangelical

truth and he certainly exercised a tremendous influence over some of the greatest minds of that time. The Rev. Dr. Henry M. Storrs, writing of Wendell Phillips says: "It is one of the facts of Phillips's life, not mentioned now, so far as I have seen, that, born and educated, and having in Boston his social and intellectual habitat, in circles that sneered at orthodoxy and hated it, he was led to hear Lyman Beecher, then freshly come from Litchfield, in his masterly expoundings of evangelical truth, discriminated from Unitarian misrepresentation on the one side, and from hyper-Calvinistic travesties of it on the other, and that, having heard and become convinced, he came out, gave himself to Christ and was recognized as a convert to Christ Jesus our Lord, as his personal Redeemer. . . . Of all that Lyman Beecher did in his great Boston work, what one item was of more account to after ages than this individual conversion of that one young man?"

Thus Henry Ward, a healthy lad of thirteen, found himself in new and strange surroundings. Though the wholesome domestic life of the Beecher household was unchanged, though father and mother and brothers were about him, he was ushered into a new and perilous experience. While the spiritual life of the family was intensified by theological controversies, Henry found himself in the midst of novel sights and scenes which made a deep impression on his wondrously impressible nature. Many of these impressions were wholesome. He has told us what effect upon his senses and glowing imagination was produced by the church-bells of Boston, and especially by the mysterious and wonderful chimes.

And then there was the first sight of the ships, and of the great sea, and the smell of the sea-air, and the ever-continuing delight of wandering about the wharves and boarding the newly arrived vessels. How incredible it would then have seemed to this boy that the time was coming, when he, a man of fifty, was to look on Boston from the sea, returning from England where he had served his country, in her hour of danger, by unparalleled oratorical achievements. And there was the weekly visit to Charlestown and the Navy Yard; there were the long rows of cannon and the mounted sea-battery, and the recollections of naval adventures and dreams of wonderful things far away across the sea. The open fields had been exchanged for the imprisoning house-walls and the ram's-horn streets of Boston, but the sea gave him outlook, and lured his mind as it has lured so many other daring and imaginative spirits, into the strange realms which the ocean both hides and reveals. He had an almost irrepressible desire for breaking away. His studies were not congenial to him; he had been sent to the Boston Latin School on School Street, that famous nursery of distinguished men, which Sumner had just left, and Phillips was about to leave, for Harvard College.

The entreaties of his father and mother, the fear of being disgraced and his religious sense of obligation led him to a dogged sort of fidelity in learning prescribed tasks, but the Latin School "was to him a grim, Sinaitic desert." He was more at home among the bobolinks and huckleberry bushes than among the keen, studious, and masterful intellects of the Boston school. "His life was a desolation, a blind

push to do what was most contrary to his natural faculties, repulsive to his taste, and in which, with utmost stress and strain of effort, he could never hope to rise above mediocrity. . . . He became moody, restless, and irritable." <sup>1</sup> His father wisely set him to the reading of biographies, naval histories, lives of great sailors and commanders. Lord Nelson became his hero. He determined to go to sea, and his father learned of his plan. It was easy for Lyman Beecher to show him that, if he were to be a sailor, he did not wish to be a common sailor or even a midshipman. Henry confessed that he wanted ultimately to be a commodore, and that in order to be ready for such a possible fate he must study mathematics and navigation. The shrewd and kindly father thus persuaded the restless boy that a preparation for college was needed, and Lyman Beecher earnestly believed that his son would yet enter the ministry.

Thomas K. Beecher has given us interesting pictures of his brother Henry in his Boston life. He has told us what a hero this brother was to him. The boy who owned the long sled and coasted down Copp's Hill, and skated on the Mill Dam, and ran to fires, and could play on the flute, and who stormed off to the Latin School, and could jump and whirl round the horizontal bar, and was fearless of open stable-doors and red cows with monstrous horns, was much more of a hero to young Thomas than was the quiet and scholarly brother Edward. In Henry's Boston experience we read more of his fights with the boys and of the violent sports and pranks in which

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 517.

he was supreme, than of any great successes in study.

And yet it was a time of important mental and moral and physical changes. His boy nature was swelling out into something larger, and life was beginning to be something besides a dream and a joke. Questions of character, of duty, of service, and of occupation, were forced upon his fermenting and developing soul in this period of juvenile turbulence. The restless desire to run away to sea was a natural result in his case of his excitation and also of his moral temptations, for he has left on record the confession that, had he remained much longer in Boston, he would have plunged into moral ruin.

He was sent to Mount Pleasant Institute near Amherst to finish his preparation for admission to college. This exchange of surroundings brought him once more into a rural and more congenial environment. The stage-coach which took him from Boston took him away from unsatisfactory and unhealthful conditions. Now in the country he is freer, and has something to live for which excites all his ambition. In the beginning he looked forward to a life of action, and this early taste for a military life reminds us of the similar early experience of the Rev. Frederick W. Robertson, who divides with Henry Ward Beecher the fame of having most profoundly impressed the preaching of this century. In the Mount Pleasant Academy, with its semi-military methods, he came under the influence of excellent teachers who were thorough, but not too severe, and who appear to have been skillful in fashioning his mind. He went through a drill in elocution under Prof. John E. Lovell,

of whom he said: "A better teacher in his department was never made." This early training was of vital importance to one destined to reach the highest fame as an orator.

Under Fitzgerald, the teacher of mathematics, Henry Ward was intellectually converted. He was taught to conquer hard lessons. What most children learn somewhat earlier, young Beecher learned at a later period and learned it thoroughly. He was forced to defend his propositions or his solutions, and thus gained intellectual self-confidence and self-control. This drill in mathematics, supplemented by his training in vocal inflections, postures and gestures was the beginning of mental enjoyment and aspiration. He was patient under the long elocutionary discipline to which he was subjected and, in later life, at Lane Theological Seminary, he continued the drill himself in company with his brother Charles. His fine dramatic power after awhile became evident. Lyman Abbott once said of him that "his face would have made him a fortune as an actor," and it is amusing to remember that, in the drama of William Tell, which was performed by the Mount Pleasant students, this champion of the lowly took the part of the tyrant Gessler.

Beecher's love of flowers, which finally became such an ardent passion with him, began to show itself in Amherst and he was sometimes seen bent in silent adoration over pansy and aster beds, "feeding his hungry little soul with the beauty of their forms and colors." School-life seems to have been to him, in this stage of his career what it is to most earnest, aspiring, and much-tempted boys. It is pleasant to learn that he

came at last to enjoy his Latin fairly well, and to make some progress in his Greek. Like most earnest students he was immensely busy, and found it hard to get time for his daily devotions. It is said that he loved to pray better than to read the Scriptures.

A revival came to the Mount Pleasant school, and, in some mysterious way, as it seemed to him, he was induced, as he then hoped, to give his heart to Christ the Lord. And, though his serious feelings had almost departed from him after a short time, he went home to Boston to join himself with the Hanover Street Church. His father had sent for him, and the boy, much agitated, full of vague ideas and vague purposes, took upon him the vows of open discipleship. He was chilled and almost paralyzed by the committee who examined him as to his hope and his evidences; his heart was petrified when he heard his name called from the pulpit, and he was far from satisfied that he was doing right. He walked home crying, filled with inexplicable wishes and longings, not thinking that he was a true Christian, suffering from a mixture of pride and humility on account of his position. There was something in his nature which required a new revelation of truth. He needed to be touched by a great experience, in order that the many orbs of his wondrous being might swing into an abiding harmony. He was deeply moved by what had occurred and the change, whatever it was which had come to him, obliterated for ever his former purpose of entering on the life of a sailor.

It was with his mind turned toward the ministry that he went back to Mount Pleasant and began the more careful study of the Bible,



especially of the Evangelists. He soon took up the Greek Testament, and he began to wonder whether it would hurt him to read the novels of Scott and Cooper. To one of his sisters he writes : "O I have such thoughts, such views of God and His love and mercy that my heart would burst through the corrupt body of this world and soar up with the angels." But this uplifted state of feeling was his while in meeting, or when reading some inspiring book. On the other hand, it is recorded that he was greatly provoked at times with the teacher who scolded and ridiculed him during recitation, and he believed that he would have been discouraged had he not had a Divine Friend on whom he could lay what seemed his great troubles. At Amherst he gave the first indication of interest in and of fondness for young women, and he became the enthusiastic friend of one of the schoolboys. They pledged to each other an everlasting fraternity! Thus early did Henry Ward Beecher enter into that beautiful and perilous world of friendship wherein he was to enjoy so keenly and suffer so terribly.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AMHERST COLLEGE AND HER GREATEST SON.

"THE end of learning," wrote Milton, in his great "Tractate on Education," "is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the Heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection." School and college life did Henry Ward Beecher noble service along the lines which the great Puritan poet deemed the true path of learning, but his greatest schooling in divine knowledge came in a later and marvelous personal experience.

In 1830, he was ready for Amherst College. He had made such excellent preparation that he was able to enter the Sophomore class, but, owing to the advice of his father, he decided to enter the Freshman class, which numbered forty members. He, who was to become the most famous graduate of that splendid New England college, was then seventeen years of age, and is described as a smooth-faced and bashful young man who so rapidly changed his appearance that sometimes his sisters hardly knew him. Dr. Heman Humphrey, father of famous and noble men, was then the President of Amherst College, which was

at that time nine years old. He had studied theology, like Lyman Beecher, under President Dwight, and, like Dr. Beecher, was an earnest apostle of temperance. "He, more than any one else, was instrumental in giving the college its character. Under his administration the purpose of its founders was realized. They desired it to be a training-school for the Church, a seminary for the education, especially of ministers and missionaries of the Cross."<sup>1</sup>

Henry Ward Beecher could never have achieved the influence and fame which came to him without such training as was given by these years at Amherst. Having acquired by Latin and mathematics the power of prolonged and systematic study, he was ready to pursue those investigations which he most liked. It was not his ambition or choice to lead his class as the best scholar, though Lewis Tappan, a classmate, writes: "In logic and class debates no one could approach him." "I listened to his flow of impassioned eloquence in those, my youthful days, with wonder and admiration."<sup>2</sup> Beecher says of himself, "I knew how to study and I turned it into things I wanted to know." The tastes of this remarkable man, whom Matthew Arnold once styled a "heated barbarian," did not lead him to the repeated study of the Greek and Latin classical authors so dear to the mind of this semi-pagan critic and poet, but rather to the great English classics whose enthusiasm and eloquence fired his imagination.

Beecher made no mean figure in college life. His classmate, Dr. Field, says of him: "I never knew

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<sup>1</sup> "Memorial Sketches of Heman and Sophia Humphrey," p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 115.

anything of him but what was good and great and orderly and becoming a Christian." "He was a strong temperance man, and was very bold to rebuke his fellow students in anything he thought to be wrong."<sup>1</sup> In the college prayer-meetings he learned to speak with fluency and with fervid eloquence. His written essays were the admiration of the college on account of their originality and freshness. One of his productions had for its theme the superiority of Pollock over Milton as a poet, a crude literary heresy of which he was undoubtedly soon cured. "He had always something to say that was fresh and striking and out of the beaten track of thought, something, too, that he had not gotten from books, but that was the product of his own thinking."<sup>2</sup> His general knowledge was unusually wide and his classmates remember with admiration his earnest and fiery speech, and recall with delight his general cheerfulness and his remarkable power of making others happy. His stories and repartees were as well known in the college then as they have since become within the bounds of civilization. Some of his practical jokes became famous, especially that one where he provided an exceedingly low chair for the very long-legged tutor in mathematics who came to his room for the purpose of exhorting him on account of some petty misdemeanor.

In his sermon on the death of Wendell Phillips, Beecher said: "Fifty years ago, during my college life, I was chosen by the Athenian Society to debate the question of African Colonization, which was then new, fresh, and enthusiastic. Fortunately I was as-

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 115.   <sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 113.

signed to the negative side of the question, and in preparing the speech, I prepared for my whole life. I contended against colonization as a condition of emancipation; enforced colonization was but little better than enforced slavery, and advocated immediate emancipation on the broad ground of human rights. I knew but very little then, but I knew this, that all men are designed of God to be free, a fact which ought to be the text of every man's life—this sacredness of humanity as given of God; redeemed from animalism by Jesus Christ, crowned and clothed with rights that no law nor oppression should dare touch." Thus he gave early signs of the coming reformer in that field where he was to achieve his grandest renown. And, unlike Wendell Phillips, who succeeded in preventing the formation of a temperance society in Harvard College, Henry Ward Beecher was an earnest temperance advocate during his college-days.

Old Dr. Beecher, like many other New England ministers with large families, most of them hungry for an education, was exceedingly straitened for money during the time that Henry was at Amherst. He scarcely knew by what means he could keep his sons at study, for Charles at this time was in Bowdoin. He had an anxious conference with his wife, and the wife lay awake all night and cried about it. Dr. Beecher said: "The Lord has always taken care of me and I am sure He will." The next morning the door-bell was rung, and a letter containing a hundred dollar bill was handed in, the thank-offering of a parishioner for the conversion of one of his children. Meanwhile Henry, pursuing his independent studies

at Amherst, became anxious to do something. He began work as a tract-distributor or Bible agent, established a daily prayer-meeting and prayed earnestly for a revival. But when the revival came, he entered into darkness, had no real joy, and, even doubting his conversion, went to good Dr. Humphrey in his wretchedness and told the President he wanted to be a Christian. He went away, however, in deeper darkness.<sup>1</sup> Professor Hitchcock, to whom he then applied, was unable to help him. Then the moody, earnest young man resorted to prayer. He says he frequently prayed all night, or would have done so if he hadn't gone to sleep. He found relief in the thought of God's faithfulness to those who put their trust in Him. All things became bright for awhile, and he wisely endeavored to help others in their spiritual unrest and distress. Yet the old moodiness returned. He had a reaction, and entered again into darkness and hopelessness. His chief help he found in the companionship of one Harrington, whom he long remembered with affectionate gratitude.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to this in his "Yale Lectures on Preaching," he says: I recollect going down to Dr. Humphrey's in a state of prodigious mental excitement on my own behalf, and asking for some instruction that I might ease myself of my burden and be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ; and he said to me: "My young friend, you are manifestly under the strivings of God's Spirit, and I dare not touch the Ark with profane hand. The Spirit of God when He strives with a man, is His own best interpreter." And so he left me to the work of the Spirit, whereas, if I had had but a very little clear instruction, it would have saved me years of anxiety, and at times, positive anguish, for want of knowledge.—"Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., pp. 241-242.

In his Sophomore year, 1831, he became engaged to Miss Eunice White Bullard, whom he afterwards married and who survives him. She was born in West Sutton, Massachusetts, August 6, 1812, and thus was ten months his senior. She was educated at Hadley. Mrs. Beecher writes: "My first meeting with Henry Ward Beecher was in the early part of May, 1830. He was a classmate of a brother of mine at Amherst College. The two were just out of their Freshman year when, together with another college classmate, they walked from Amherst to my father's house at West Sutton for their spring vacation. At that time young Beecher was not quite seventeen years old, and so young and boyish was his appearance that no one would have thought him more than fifteen."<sup>1</sup>

Beecher brought great life to the West Sutton household, and his winning gentleness and irrepressible fun were particularly enjoyed. Miss Bullard's father said of him: "Well, he is smart! He'll make his mark in the world if he lives." And her mother often said of him: "Henry always brings sunshine and makes me feel young." Mrs. Beecher records that "as a young man he was unusually free from any bad habits. He never smoked nor used tobacco in any form either as a boy, youth, or full-grown young man. He never indulged in a drop of liquor. His language was as pure when among his companions as when in the parlor. He rejected all indulgences. As a young man he never played cards; indeed, he

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<sup>1</sup> "Mr. Beecher as I Knew Him," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October, 1891.

never knew one card from another. He avoided all these habits in his later years, although he had no prejudice against the playing of cards by others, if played for amusement and at home. After coming to Brooklyn, we both learned to play backgammon. It was a quiet game and he said it helped him to a good night's rest if his labors during the day had excited him so much as to retard his usually sound sleep."<sup>1</sup>

When Mr. Beecher's engagement was announced to the parents the father was angry and the mother greatly grieved. "Why you are a couple of babies," he said, "you don't know your own minds and you wont for some years to come." Mrs. Beecher adds, "but fifty-seven years have given ample proof that we did." Henry's wonderfully earnest appeal overcame at last all the opposition in the heart of the strong, proud man who doubted the strength of that affection which was destined to endure so long. Mrs. Beecher records that Henry at this time was an exceedingly homely young man, and a portrait of him at seventeen, the first portrait ever taken of one who has been portrayed in hundreds of aspects, is certainly the least engaging of all his pictures.

But it is not needful to elaborate the details which have come down to us of Beecher's college years. Always active in learning or doing; teaching a school in the village of West Sutton, giving temperance lectures, for one of which he received a fee of five

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<sup>1</sup>"Mr. Beecher as I Knew Him," *Ladies' Home Journal*, October, 1891.



dollars from which he made a present of Baxter's "Saints' Rest" to his beloved; walking, during a college vacation, to Brattleboro, Vermont, and receiving ten dollars for the address he gave there, and with this large sum buying Miss Bullard's engagement-ring which was also her wedding-ring; preaching his first sermon in Northbridge, Massachusetts, where he taught school in 1831 and 1833; teaching school in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, where he carried on a revival meeting in the evenings; beginning the study of phrenology in his Sophomore year, a study which he was destined to continue through life; beginning the collection of a library out of his small money allowances and small earnings; writing his first article, printed in the college paper, on the scenery which had excited his imagination in one of his lecture tramps; rejoicing in being able to add to his library a splendid copy of the works of Edmund Burke, the study of which added strength and splendor to his style; forsaking all wasteful expenditures that he might increase his stock of books; reading largely and widely from the old English writers,—such is a partial record of those eager preparatory days at Amherst.

One poem of Samuel Daniel, who was the laureate of Queen Elizabeth until Ben Jonson superseded him, so greatly fascinated Beecher in his youth that he was accustomed to read it over and over. It was composed of lines addressed by Daniel to the Earl of Southampton, and Mr. Beecher says they were about the only piece of poetry he ever committed to memory. As a good deal in Mr. Beecher's future trial, struggle, and character is sug-

gested in these strong lines, they are worth reading.

"He who hath never warred with misery,  
Nor ever tugged with fortune in distress,  
Hath no occasion and no field to try  
The strength and forces of his worthiness.  
Those parts of judgment which felicity  
Keeps as concealed, affliction must express,  
And only men show their abilities  
And what they are, in their extremities."

"Mutius the fire, the tortures Regulus,  
Did make the miracles of faith and zeal;  
Exile renowned and graced Rutilius,  
Imprisonment and poison did reveal  
The worth of Socrates, Fabricius,  
Poverty did grace that common weal  
More than all Sylla's riches got with strife,  
And Cato's death did vie with Cæsar's life."

"Such an enthusiasm," said Mrs. Stowe, "shows clearly on what a key the young man had set his life-purposes and what he was looking for in his life-battle."<sup>1</sup> Another poem had a great fascination for him. It was Daniel's address to Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, one specimen of which is the following:

"He that of such a height hath built his mind,  
And reared the dwelling of his thought so strong  
As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame  
Of his resolved powers; nor all the wind

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of our Times," p. 528.

Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong  
 His settled peace, or to disturb the same ;  
 What a fair seat hath he ! From whence he may  
 The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey."

"It has had a good long swing," said Beecher, "and it will go rolling down a great many years yet." Nothing could have been more fortunate than his early enthusiastic study of the English classic poets.

The poets are the best teachers of language and no nation was ever favored by a group of singers equal to those who clustered around London in the days of Elizabeth, James, and the first Charles. The reading of Spenser, Shakespeare, Daniel, and Milton by a mind of his temperament, with his work to do in the world, was one of the chief events in his intellectual development. He may not have deemed it so important as his study of phrenology, but it was vastly more necessary to the life which Providence had marked out for him. While in college he read the works of Combe, Gall, and Spurzheim, formed a Phrenological Club, and lectured on phrenology, that empirical system whose principles or speculations are very old and which has of recent days captivated even such men as Sir George McKenzie, Archbishop Whateley, and Geoffroy St. Hilare. This early enthusiasm for phrenology was in some respects a piece of good fortune. It led him into physiological and scientific studies and these continued through life. He made more use of his physiological knowledge in his subsequent preaching than he did of the Scotch metaphysics which he grappled with while in college. However questionable phrenology may be as a science, it was an exceeding great help to Beecher in describing

occupy the new territory; it was still the rendezvous of frontiersmen; more than this, it lay upon the borderland between the Free and Slave States, and already felt the uneasiness and bitterness of the irrepressible conflict. Chain-gangs of slaves were continually passing on the docks to the steamboats to be sold down South, and fugitives from bondage were keeping the sympathy or the hatred of the people in continual activity."<sup>1</sup>

Into this great valley of decision, into the earnest and various life of the Seminary and of the large Beecher household, Henry Ward now entered, having completed, in 1834, his course at Amherst College. Lane Seminary, "a brick building in the woods of Ohio," where the students could hear the "whistle of the quail, the scolding squirrels, . . . the soft thump and pat of the rabbit, and the breezy rush of the wild pigeons," furnished such a blending of the attractions of Nature and learning that it seems like an ideal place for such a mind as young Beecher's. It was a place of freedom and of zealous work. The forest which lay between the Seminary and Lyman Beecher's house was made "to ring with vocal practice and musical scales in imitation of band music" by Lyman Beecher's stentorian sons, Henry and Charles. It was fortunate for the future pastor of Plymouth Church that he then came under the wise instruction of Prof. Calvin E. Stowe, who was soon to be married to his sister Harriet. For Professor Stowe he entertained, through life, the warmest friendship, and by him he was led into a

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 153.

thorough study and analysis of the Bible, "not as the parts of a machine, but as a body of truth instinct with God, warm with all divine and human sympathies, clothed with language adapted to their best expression, and to be understood as similar language used for similar ends in every-day life."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beecher's claim to be a Biblical preacher, though frequently and, perhaps, generally denied, must be vindicated, if at all, by his frequent use and explanation of large tracts of Scripture. In his reading from the New Testament, particularly, he was wont to comment with singular freshness of thought and expression on the passages he had read, especially when they were found in Paul's Epistles. And, though it must be confessed that the great Apostle would have sometimes failed to recognize his own ideas after they had passed through the mind of the poet-philosopher, still it must be said that Mr. Beecher often penetrated with his clear analysis, and his thorough understanding of the differences of the Hellenistic from the American mind, into the very heart of the Apostle's meanings.

Dr. Beecher lived in a brick house which Henry with his own hand painted a sort of a cream color. From the amount of life going on within the house, we should say to-day that it might well have been painted a fiery red! The president of Lane Seminary was also the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church where Henry taught a Bible-class of young ladies, making the most careful preparation for his work. The life into which Beecher now entered was

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 137.

a constant high tide of intellectual and moral excitement. Forty students had left Lane Seminary for Oberlin on account of the conservative position which they felt that Dr. Beecher had taken in regard to the slavery discussion. "Of the several gloomy years that succeeded the Abolition secession, I need only say that the wonder is that Lane did not perish. It had few students and little money."<sup>1</sup> But the enthusiasm in the Beecher household was not dependent on crowds of students.

The late Professor Evans, of Lane, described Dr. Beecher as "alert, fertile, self-forgetful, magnetic, full of electric fire, flashing with quaint originality, logical though not systematic, soaring spontaneously to the heights of eloquence, kindling into enthusiasm at every glimpse of millennial glory."<sup>2</sup> Such a man was a theological university in himself. The life of the Beecher household "was a kind of moral Heaven," with the young men, Henry and Charles, singing the "Creation" and the "Messiah," discussing natural and moral inability, reading Sir Walter Scott, writing out notes of the lectures on Church history and finding life thoroughly worth living. Henry lectured on temperance and phrenology, and went with his father to the meetings of the Presbytery which were sometimes stormy with debate. The Beecher family were not rich; indeed they were in straightened circumstances. Lyman Beecher was described as a man "before his age in his views and always before his salary in his expenses." But was

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Joseph F. Tuttle, "Souvenir of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the History of Lane Theological Seminary," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Lane Souvenir," pp. 24-25.

there ever a household richer in intellectual and moral life?

While pursuing his theological studies Henry Ward became editor, for a time, of the *Cincinnati Journal*, and was aided in this by his sister, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and when the pro-slavery riots broke out in 1836, he was sworn in as special constable to protect the negroes and their friends who were in great peril of their lives. "For a day or two, we did not know but there would be actually war to the knife, as was threatened by the mob, and we really saw Henry depart with his pistols, with daily alarm; only we were all too full of patriotism not to have sent every brother we had, rather than not have had the principles of freedom and order defended. But here the tide turned. The mob, unsupported by a now frightened community, slunk into their dens and were still."<sup>1</sup>

Among the glimpses given us of Mr. Beecher at Lane is one which he has furnished in regard to an early sermon for which he had no paternal pride. "My brother George wished to be away a Sunday, and I was requested to supply his pulpit. Text, sermon, and all attendant circumstances are gone from my memory, except the *greenness*, no doubt of that."<sup>2</sup> Another interesting event was the family reunion, a meeting of the eleven Beecher children for the first time, a meeting which filled Dr. Beecher with transports of joy. "There were more tears than words. The Doctor attempted to pray, but could scarcely speak. His full heart poured itself out in a flood of weeping. He could not go

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> "Anecdotes of Henry Ward Beecher," p. 48.

on; Edward continued, each one in his turn uttered some sentence of thanksgiving. They then began at the head and related their fortunes. After special prayer all joined hands and sang 'Old Hundred' in these words:

'From all that dwell below the skies  
Let the Creator's praise arise.'"<sup>1</sup>

It must also be mentioned that at the close of Henry's first year in the seminary there occurred the death of Mrs. Beecher, of whom her son writes "that God was with her in her closing days, and that the light of His countenance cheered her pathway to the tomb."

Parts of an old journal kept by Henry while at Lane Seminary have been preserved. In this we find his meditations, many of them quite characteristic, on his own spiritual life, analyses of Scott, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Byron, and Burns; references to his Bible-class which absorbed much of his thought, and affectionate references to Eunice Bullard with whom he kept up a faithful correspondence, most of which has unhappily been destroyed. But some of the strongest influences that were to shape his future life came from the theological controversy in which his father was violently assailed. From that long and exceedingly bitter strife between "the forces of the Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian, Calvinistic fatalism," and "the advancing rationalism of New England New School theology," it was natural that Henry Ward Beecher should come out with the strongest antipathy to

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 143.



every form of heresy-hunting and to most forms of theological contention. Dr. Wilson, who was the leader of the attacking party, is described as a man who "in many points marvelously resembled General Jackson, both in person and in character, and he fought the battle with the same gallant, headlong vigor and sincere, unflinching constancy. His habits of thought were those of a Western pioneer, accustomed from childhood to battle with Indians and wild beasts in the frontier life of an early State. His views of mental philosophy, and of the modes of influencing the human mind, were like those of the Emperor Constantine when he commanded a whole Synod of Bishops to think alike without a day's delay, or those of the Duke of Wellington when he told the doubting inquirers at Oxford that the thing to be done was to sign the Thirty-nine Articles and believe them."<sup>1</sup>

Henry Ward Beecher learned that, however earnest, unselfish, and consecrated the life of a Christian minister like his father might be, he was not safe from persecution, unless he conformed to the literal teachings of what he deemed an irrational, misleading, and obsolescent theology. Good men, fired with a mistaken zeal for the Lord, shooting their arrows at Christian brethren, filled him with a lifelong disgust. His immense activity in those times of his father's theological trouble was not given to assailing others, but was expended, with filial piety, in defense of Dr. Beecher. "What racing and chasing along muddy Western roads, to obscure towns, each party hoping

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 534.

that the length of the way and the depth of the mud would discourage their opponents, keep them away and so give their own side the majority! Dr. Beecher and his sons, it was soon found, could race and chase and ride like born Kentuckians, and that free agency on horseback would go through mud and fire and water as gallantly as ever natural inability could. There was something grimly ludicrous in the dismay with which Dr. Wilson, inured from his boyhood to bear-fights, and to days and nights spent in cane-brakes and dens of wolves, found, on his stopping at an obscure log hut in the depth of the wilderness, Dr. Beecher, with his sons and his New School delegates, ahead of him on their way to Synod."<sup>1</sup>

When we think of Henry Ward Beecher with his father, "scurrying through the country, not to rescue souls from danger nor to forward any great moral end, but to anticipate the action of some Presbytery or to arrange for some meeting of Synod," when we think of Lyman Beecher compelled to leave his wife's death-bed to repel the attacks of heresy-hunters, we find in all this an important key to Henry Ward Beecher's later attitude towards churches and divisive theological creeds. But, as was afterwards truly said of Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. Lyman Beecher "had enemies, but no enmities." He had no personal bitterness against Dr. Wilson. At the Sixtieth Anniversary of Lane Theological Seminary, Rev. John W. Bishop, who knew him well, remarked: "What dear Prof. Z. M. Humphrey said of another was most true of Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 535.

Beecher. No one, we believe, ever more devoutly wished to think of his conflicts as impersonal, the conflict of opinion rather than of men. In the later and serener periods of his life, he remembered them, rather as the mariner on shore remembers the tossings of a storm, the winds and waves with which he wrestled, not the Æolus who unloosed the former or the Neptune who disturbed the latter."<sup>1</sup>

The three years at Lane Seminary were a time of intellectual broadening, earnest spiritual activity, and deep soul unrest. His letters to Miss Bullard show that he was much troubled with doubts. He had no idea that these doubts were "devil-born." He manfully faced "the specters of the mind," but as he looked out into the future, his prospects seemed uncertain. He was far from sure of finding a home in the Presbyterian ministry, and, in the event of not being licensed, he dreamed and thought of going away into the far West, building a log hut in the wilderness, hunting up the scattered settlers, and preaching to them the Gospel. "I will preach if it is in the byways and hedges." "I must preach the Gospel as it is revealed to *me*."<sup>2</sup>

There came a time when his mind was carried over into a miserable, wholesale skepticism, and for the greater part of two years, he refused to stir one step until he saw something sure under his feet. And then came that manifestation of God which was Beecher's second conversion. In all the records of Christian history there have been few spiritual expe-

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<sup>1</sup> *Presbyterian Quarterly*, July 1871.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 154.

riences more momentous. We think of Saul at the gate of Damascus, of Augustine at Milan, of Luther in the Erfurt Monastery, of John Bunyan's escape from the burden of sin at Bedford, of John Wesley's spiritual enfranchisement after his conference with Peter Böhler, the young Moravian missionary, of Charles G. Finney's almost miraculous vision of Christ in his lawyer's office in the New York village.

The preaching for fifty years of the most influential man who ever stood in an American pulpit received its tone and mighty energy from that golden and transcendent hour. It is always best described in his own glowing words: "I was a child of teaching and prayer; I was reared in the household of faith. . . . And yet, till after I was twenty-one years old, I groped without the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. I know not what the tablets of eternity have written down, but I think that when I stand in Zion and before God, the brightest thing which I shall look back upon will be that blessed morning in May when it pleased God to reveal to my wandering soul the idea that it was His nature to love a man in his sins for the sake of helping him out of them; that He did not do it out of compliment to Christ, or to a law or plan of salvation, but from the fulness of His great heart; that He was a Being not made mad by sin, but sorry; that He was not furious with wrath toward the sinner, but pitied him—in short, that He felt toward me as my mother felt toward me, to whose eyes my wrong-doing brought tears, who never pressed me so close to her as when I had done wrong, and who would fain, with her yearning love, lift me out of trouble."

And what follows reminds us of the famous confession by Jonathan Edwards of the transformation which came to the visible world after his conversion, when he saw "a calm, sweet cast or appearance of divine glory in almost everything," "in the sun, and moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky, in the grass, flowers, trees, in the water, and all Nature which used greatly to fix my mind." Mr. Beecher said: "I shall never forget the feelings with which I walked forth that May morning. The golden pavements will never feel to my feet as then the grass felt to them; and the singing of the birds in the woods—for I roamed in the woods—was cacophonous to the sweet music of my thoughts; and there were no forms in the universe which seemed to me graceful enough to represent the Being, a conception of whose character had just dawned upon my mind. I felt when I had with the Psalmist called upon the heavens, the earth, the mountains, the streams, the floods, the birds, the beasts, and universal being, to praise God, that I had called upon nothing that could praise Him enough for the revelation of such a nature as that in the Lord Jesus Christ. Time went on, and next came the disclosure of the Christ ever present with me—a Christ that never was far from me, but was always near me, as a companion and friend to uphold and sustain me. This was the last and best revelation of God's Spirit to my soul. It is what I consider to be the culminating work of God's grace in man; and no man is a Christian until he has experienced it. I do not mean that a man cannot be a good man until then; but he has not got to Jerusalem till the gate

has been opened to him, and he has seen the King sitting in His glory with love to him individually." <sup>1</sup>

This great experience, which shaped his whole life and teaching, was given him in Lane Seminary after the period of unrest and doubt into which he had plunged. He describes the change which transfigured his life in these other words: "It then pleased God to lift upon me such a view of Christ, as one whose nature and office it is to have infinite and exquisite pity upon the weakness and want of sinners, as I had never had before. I saw that He had compassion upon them because they were sinners, and because He wanted to help them out of their sins. It came to me like the bursting forth of spring. It was as if yesterday there was not a bird to be seen or heard, and as if to-day the woods were full of singing birds. There rose up before me a view of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners—not of saints, but of sinners unconverted, before they were any better—because they were so bad and needed so much; and that view has never gone from me. It did not at first fill the whole Heaven; it came as a rift along the horizon; gradually, little by little, the cloud rolled up. It was three years before the whole sky was cleared so that I could see all around, but from that hour I felt that God had a father's heart; that Christ loved me in my sin; that while I was a sinner He did not frown upon me nor cast me off, but cared for me with unutterable tenderness, and would help me out of sin; and it seemed to me that I had everything I needed. When that vision was vouchsafed to me I felt that there

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Beecher," pp. 35, 36, 37.

was no more for me to do but to love, trust, and adore; nor has there ever been in my mind a doubt since that I *did* love, trust, and adore. There has been an imperfect comprehension, there have been grievous sins, there have been long defections; but never for a single moment have I doubted the power of Christ's love to save me, any more than I have doubted the existence in the heavens of the sun by day and the moon by night."

Whatever may be thought of the theology suggested by some parts of these personal recitals of a great experience, there can be no doubt of the genuineness and transcendent importance of that intellectual and emotional change which had been wrought in him. He was being girded for a great mission; he was being equipped for a lifelong battle and for strange coming experiences of sorrow and trial. He was not fitted to wield the weapons of his father, but no man of his day was more eager and bold to attack evil and strengthen the Kingdom of righteousness. As Mrs. Stowe has written: "Like the shepherd boy of old he saw the giant of sin stalking through the world, defying the armies of the living God, and longed to attack him, but the armor in which he had been equipped for the battle was no help, but only an incumbrance."<sup>1</sup> But his experience changed all this. "To present Jesus Christ personally as the Friend and Helper of humanity, Christ as God impersonate, eternally and by the necessity of His nature helpful and remedial and restorative; the Friend of each individual soul, and thus the friend of all society; this was the one thing which his soul

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of our Times," p. 539.

rested on as a worthy object in entering the ministry. He afterwards said in speaking of his feelings at this time: 'I was like the man in the story to whom a fairy gave a purse with a single piece of money in it, which he found always came again as soon as he had spent it. I thought I knew at last one thing to preach, I found it included everything.'"



## CHAPTER VIII.

### TESTING HIS WEAPONS.

**THE** years of preparation with all their strange and varied experiences are now ended, and the Christian soldier is ready to enter the field of strife. There is no gleam of romance that lights up that field. Few preachers of the Gospel have known from the outset equal hardships. At the junction of the Ohio and Miami rivers is the town of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, which, in 1837, had fifteen hundred inhabitants and four gigantic distilleries. And Mr. Beecher, having been graduated from Lane Theological Seminary and licensed by the Cincinnati Presbytery, after the usual examination and the reading of his trial lecture, was led, by the invitation of an earnest Christian Yankee woman, to go to Lawrenceburg, and, in that unattractive field, where the Presbyterian Church of twenty members consisted of nineteen women and one good-for-nothing man, to preach his trial sermon. It was in June, 1837, that he received a unanimous call to the pastorate of this church, at a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars. The event was a momentous one in this great life, and the thoughtful Christian student finds it an event of deep interest and wide significance in the history of modern thought and modern evangelism, when this young man of twenty-

four began to test those weapons of love, which he had gathered from the arsenal of the Holy Spirit, and the shining armor with which he had girded himself for the battle of the Lord.

The year 1837 marks a really remote epoch in the annals of America. The great men of that time were Jackson, Clay, Webster, and Calhoun. Abraham Lincoln had served a single term in the Illinois Legislature, but was unknown to fame. The United States was then a small nation with a big heart and an unusually big head. At the Presidential election of the previous year the whole vote of the country was only a million and a half, a vote surpassed in 1892 by the combined suffrages of two States of the Union. A great tide of Western immigration was pouring in. Arkansas was admitted as a State in 1836 and Michigan in 1837. But the present metropolis of the Northwest was then a mud-hole at the foot of Lake Michigan, and her first census, taken that year, showed a population of 4,170. The New World's commercial capital, New York, was then the residence of less than three hundred thousand people.

American literature was scarcely born in 1837. The anti-slavery agitation had been launched by William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips had enlisted in the battle for the slave. The most prominent event of that year was the financial panic. Before Van Buren had been two months in the chair of Jackson the mercantile failures in New York alone amounted to a hundred millions of dollars. During the year 1837 occurred the division of the Presbyterian Church into the Old and New School Assemblies. While Henry Ward Beecher was still an obscure young man, though bear-

ing a great name, making pastoral visits amid shanties and shops in a rough Hoosier river town, the theological celebrities of the country were shining and numerous. Among them were Dr. Archibald Alexander, who was then teaching theology at Princeton, as he had been for twenty-five years; Dr. Eliphalet Nott, President of Union College; Dr. John McDowell, of the Central Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia; Dr. Gardner Spring, of the Brick Church, New York; Dr. George Duffield, who that year was leaving New York for Detroit where he became the beloved patriarch of the Presbyterian Church in Michigan; the famous Albert Barnes, of the First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, whom the General Assembly, the previous year, had acquitted of the charge of heresy, the heresy supposed to be lodged in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and his Sermon on the Way of Salvation. How the weeds of oblivion and indifference have overgrown the battlements on which fought the theologians of 1836!

Dr. Nathaniel Emmons, in 1837, had yet three years to live. Dr. Charles Hodge was Professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature in Princeton. Dr. Edward Robinson was that year called to the professorship of Biblical Literature in the one-year-old Union Theological Seminary in New York, and had not yet achieved his fame. Henry B. Smith was pursuing his theological studies at Bangor; Professor Phelps had that year been graduated from the University of Pennsylvania; Dr. Mark Hopkins had just entered on the Presidency of Williams College; Professor Park was teaching Sacred Rhetoric at Andover; Dr. Robert W. Patterson, who for many years has been

"the unmitred pope of the Presbyterian denomination in the Northwest," was then a student at Lane Seminary, and Dr. Richard S. Storrs had two years of study yet to complete in Amherst College. Dr. Talmage was then a boy of five and Spurgeon was a child of three and Phillips Brooks was not yet two.

Mr. Beecher's little parish in Lawrenceburg had none of the exquisite charms of that New England village life which he has pictured so delightfully in "Norwood." Like other Western towns of that time, it was an extemporized, rough, and unadorned collection of temporary houses. It was situated on low ground, wet with the overflow of two rivers. "The houses that were built in early days of poverty were low; and generally twice a year—in the autumn, and in the spring when the snow melted on the mountains—the Ohio came booming down and overflowed; and men were obliged to emigrate." Mr. Beecher often recalled the days of his early ministry, speaking of the flock which he found and the flock which he gathered; of himself as sexton, lamplighter, church sweeper, and general care-taker of the little structure wherein he preached, and which was soon crowded to overflowing. He says: "I did not ring the bell because there was none to ring. I opened the church before prayer-meetings and preaching, and locked it when they were over." "We were all poor together. And to the day of my death I shall never forget one of those faces or hear one of those names spoken without having excited in my mind the warmest remembrances."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Beecher," p. 42.

After a four years' separation from his betrothed, Henry Ward Beecher was married on the 3d of August, 1837, to Miss Eunice White Bullard, Rev. Mr. Tracy being the officiating clergyman. The marriage ceremony was postponed for a time that day on account of a severe thunder-storm. Mrs. Beecher writes: "A little before four o'clock the storm departed, and—

Softly o'er my gladdened heart  
Expands the bow of peace—

for when Henry took me into the parlor where our few guests were waiting, the brightness of the most glorious rainbow I had ever seen fell upon us as we stood before the clergyman, who ended his prayer 'And so may the bow of peace and promise ever rest upon these Thy servants,' and thus on Bullard's Hill, at West Sutton, Massachusetts, Mr. Beecher and I were married. Bidding adieu to parents, brothers, sisters, and friends, we left the dear old home to go out into a world, which unknown to us held so much for us." Mr. Beecher had determined to have his wife present at his ordination, and hence this journey to the East. It is amusing to the men and women of this day to read that the most famous of modern preachers and his wife who was about to be, on their wedding-day, made their own wedding-cake, he picking over and stoning the raisins, beating the eggs and keeping the whole family in good spirits while the hurried preparations went on.

But the simplicities and homeliness of life in a Massachusetts village, a half century and more ago, are very enchanting compared with the hard-

ships on which Mr. and Mrs. Beecher were soon to enter in their Western parish. Beginning house-keeping on a meager salary, in two rooms upstairs over a stable; calling in the assistance of the paternal household on Walnut Hills, securing a cooking-stove from a brother, and dishes from a Seminary classmate, and a variety of things from "Father Beecher and Mrs. Stowe"; cleaning out the dirty rooms with their own hands, with indomitable pluck and the merriest good nature—such were the preparations made by this loving couple for their first home. The wife eked out the meager salary by taking in sewing and later by taking in boarders. Of his home-life Mrs. Beecher says: "Home was always the place, whether in early or later life, where Mr. Beecher shone the brightest; where the noblest and best parts of his character were the most thoroughly developed and best understood. There he never failed to reveal himself in his best and happiest moods."<sup>1</sup> Although he had not been an early riser, he very soon discovered, after his marriage, that early rising would make the work of the household much easier, and this habit, learned at that time, continued through his life. Much of his writing and reading was done before breakfast.

Mr. Beecher began his pastoral work with distinct ideas and plans which he set down in his journal. The Church which he had come to was nearly extinct, and it was not possible to one of his temper to have anything to do with a moribund organization if he were capable of infusing into it any of his own

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<sup>1</sup> *The Ladies' Home Journal*, Nov. 1891.

superabundant life. His plans included thorough house-to-house visitation, and the securing of a large congregation from the beginning, which he put foremost, and the inspiring in others of a sense of personal responsibility. To gain a congregation he determined to preach well uniformly, to visit widely, and to secure the love of the young. He was then a pensioner of the American Home Missionary Society, and it is very suggestive to remember that the funds given by patriotic Christian benevolence in the East went to the support of one who, in later time returning to the East, was to fire many hearts with enthusiasm for that home-missionary work whose large claims and possibilities he, like his great father, so thoroughly understood.

In September, 1838, he applied for ordination. The Presbyterian Church had been rent into two contentious bodies. The Oxford Presbytery had determined to ordain no one who did not connect himself with the Old-School Presbyterian Church. Dr. Beecher had been charged with heresy, slander, and hypocrisy! Henry Ward applied to the Oxford Presbytery for ordination, going to the meeting on horseback, and nearly losing his life in crossing a swollen river. Deep interest was aroused by his application. Here was an opportunity of showing the laxity of Dr. Lyman Beecher's theological views. But the examination to which Henry Ward was subjected revealed him as incorrigibly orthodox, and a unanimous vote was passed to receive him. But the next day the Presbytery, foreseeing the peril of losing the candidate, passed two resolutions, one sincerely adhering to the Old-School General Assembly, and the

other requiring all licentiates and candidates **under** their care to do the same, or be no longer such. “**I** being my father's son, spurned the idea of going **over** to the Old School; I felt as big as forty men; **and** when that resolution passed, I simply said: ‘**Well**, brethren, I have nothing to do but to go back to **my** father's house.’ They were kind to me; they seemed to have conceived an affection for the young man; . . . they tried to persuade me to comply with their wish; but I was determined, and said, ‘I won't.’ I always had the knack of saying that and sticking to it!” His papers were given back to him, and he returned to Lawrenceburg. Recounting, on the next Sunday, to his own people the proceedings of the Oxford Presbytery, they voted to withdraw from it, and to become an independent Presbyterian Church.

Those were the dark and distressful days of clashing synods and warring presbyteries. But on Nov. 9, 1838, Beecher applied to the New-School Presbytery in Cincinnati for ordination over the Independent Presbyterian Church at Lawrenceburg. He was then ordained. It is important to remember that, as he himself said, his whole life took its color to a considerable degree from the controversies in the church at that time. These bitter and dividing quarrels were far from being to his taste, and he came to disregard organizations and to cherish a warm love to all denominations and a willingness to coöperate with all. He made up his mind with divine help never to engage in religious contention. “I remember riding through the woods for long, dreary days, and I recollect at one time coming out into an open place where the sun shone down through the bank of



the river, and where I had such a sense of the love of Christ, of the nature of His work on earth, of its beauty and grandeur, and such a sense of the miserableness of Christian men quarreling and seeking to build up antagonistic churches—in other words the Kingdom of Christ rose up before my mind with such supreme loveliness and majesty—that I sat in my saddle I do not know how long (many, many minutes, perhaps half an hour), and there, all alone, in a great forest of Indiana, probably twenty miles from any house, prayed for that Kingdom, saying audibly ‘I will never be a sectary.’ These scenes and experiences in his rough Western life he justly regarded as in some respects a better theological school than Lane Seminary. What an immense and wide impression these profound early convictions made not only on his life. but on the mind of American Christendom! More than any other man he was destined to show that the body of Christ, His Church, is mercilessly crucified and mangled on the cross of a fanatical, unwise, distorted devotion to Church organization and secondary truths.

Mrs. Beecher writes: “How vividly I recall that first Sabbath! How young, how boyish he did look! And how indignant I felt when some of the *higher classes* came in out of simple curiosity, to see the surprised, almost scornful looks that were interchanged! He read the first hymn and read it well, as they had never heard their own ministers (often illiterate, uneducated men) read hymns. I watched the expression change on their faces. Then the first prayer! It was a revelation to them; and when he began the sermon the critical expression had vanished, and they

evidently settled themselves to *hear* in earnest."<sup>1</sup> A deep impression was made from the start by the preaching of the new minister. He became universally popular on account of his freedom of intercourse with all classes. He sought out the neglected, and had frequent discussions with an infidel shoemaker. He himself says: "I preached some theology. I had just come out of the Seminary and retained some portions of systematic theology which I used when I had nothing else; and as a man chops straw and mixes it with Indian meal in order to distend the stomach of the ox that eats it, so I chopped a little of the regular orthodox theology that I might sprinkle it with the meal of the Lord Jesus Christ. But my horizon grew larger and larger in that one idea of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

The first child was born to the Beecher household while in Lawrenceburg. In 1839 he was called to the Second Presbyterian Church, of Indianapolis, at a salary of six hundred dollars. He declined the call, but it was renewed, and he declined it the second time. In his perplexity he consented at last to lay the matter before the Synod, and, as the Synod urged him to accept, he finally agreed to do so. Thus, as his horizon of thought and experience widened, there came a widening of opportunity. He never sought promotion, he never hung around idle "waiting for a *good offer*," he believed in entering the first field that God opened and letting Him swing wide the gate to a

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Statement of Belief before the New York and Brooklyn Association.—"Life of Beecher," p. 491.

larger field. He knew the joy of the ministry from the beginning, and, without expecting to accomplish much, he did his best faithfully from the start. He had no false humility as a servant of Christ, and was willing to wear old clothing which kindly friends gave him. "I could have said, 'Humph! pretty business! Son of Lyman Beecher, President of the Theological Seminary, in this miserable hole, where there is no church and where there are no elders and no men to make them out of.' . . . But I was delivered from such feeling. I remember that I used to ride out in the neighborhood and preach to the destitute, and that my predominating feeling was thanksgiving that God had permitted me to preach the unsearchable riches of His grace." Mr. Beecher was always a man of largest sympathies and of unbounded generosity, but having endured hardships himself and been happy in them, having known the trials of sickness and poverty on the frontier, he had little patience with that phase of socialism which demands that the poor should be clothed without responsible effort on their part, and with that complaining spirit which is usually associated with idleness and want of character. Some of his expressions which gave great offense in his later years should be interpreted in the light of his own experiences and of his conviction that a certain amount of discipline and trial is far better than indolence, unearned luxury, and undeserved ease.

## CHAPTER IX.

### INDIANAPOLIS. THE WESTERN EVANGELIST.

LAWRENCEBURG was the first school in Mr. Beecher's apprenticeship in the divine art of preaching. He had already learned how to make people eager to hear him. In his new field in Indianapolis he was to learn how to reach people with the Gospel message, so that convictions, heart, and life should be changed by it. There, too, he was to make his chief contribution to the grandest and most urgent of all American causes and problems, Western evangelization. Without doubt he was the greatest of all home-missionary preachers. Others may have labored longer and with larger immediate results: others may have been the founders of Churches which have had a more imposing and fruitful history than even the noble Church which he served in Indianapolis, and which has numbered among its later pastors several distinguished men. But Henry Ward Beecher was the most famous and effective pulpit orator ever identified with the Great West, and into the larger ministry which he was destined to accomplish in Brooklyn he carried the special training which probably only the West could have given him. His memory will be cherished as an illustrious example of that Christian patriotism which has ennobled the annals of American evangelization.

This preacher of unequaled reputation was, for ten years, a fellow pioneer with those fine-fibered men and women, many of whom left cultured homes in the East and endured hardship and sickness for the sake of Christ, amid the malarial swamps, the half-cleared forests, and the wide prairies of the West, and who have since carried the Christian Church, the Christian College, the Christian Sabbath, and the Christian Home, across rivers and mountains, to the Pacific Coast, making sacred by their toils and sacrifices the far-reaching fields of the American continent. The spirit which moved Mr. Beecher has been equally strong in multitudes whose names have gained no place even on the margin of the page of history, Home-missionary preachers with meagerest salaries, Sunday-school missionaries, self-denying presidents and founders of colleges, and hundreds of teachers in those Christian schools and seminaries which have starred with points of sacred light the march of civilization to the Golden Gate.

Mr. Beecher's heart was deeply stirred and his imagination was roused by the Christian possibilities of the Mississippi Valley, "the most magnificent habitation" as De Tocqueville has written, "which the Almighty ever prepared for the abode of man." The West furnished a nobler field for Christian chivalry than did the sea, which had fascinated his dreamy and yearning boyhood. His knowledge of men, and especially of average men, of which he made such splendid use in the pulpit, was largely derived from the Hoosierized Yankees, in whom the strength of New England was mingled with the fervor and excitability of the South. The most honored and

the most representative of American statesmen was born in Kentucky and received his rude training in Indiana and Illinois. The excess of the humorous habit in Beecher, as in Lincoln, received its justification, or at least its explanation, from some of the peculiarities of early Western life. The wit was a missionary of light and gladness among the rough pioneers who lacked nearly all the devices and comforts of civilization. In a life where chills and fever entered as a miserable and malign element, often for many months of the year, into every household, the joker, the man who could bring cheer and stir laughter, was a welcome angel.

The Western preachers were very often distinguished for their power of quick repartee, and wide liberty was permitted to the ministerial contestants who were wont to meet in a certain store in Indianapolis. It is said that on one occasion, after Mr. Beecher had been thrown over his horse's head into the Miami River, which he was endeavoring to cross on one of his missionary tours, the accident, which was freely talked over the next day, induced his friend, the Baptist minister, to rally him on the fact that Beecher had finally been immersed and had become as good a Baptist as anybody. But the quick-witted Beecher was more than even with his brother, when he replied, with good-natured contempt, "My immersion was a different thing from that of your converts. You see I was immersed by a horse, not by an ass!"

Mr. Beecher carried the West with him to the East, and of all American preachers he was the most national, we may say continental, in his sympathies. There was never anything particularly conventional

about any of the Beechers, but we may ascribe in part Henry Ward Beecher's familiar ways in social intercourse and the excess of the unconventional in his character, in some measure, to his ten years of Western training. And he was also to carry with him to the East that liberal and catholic spirit, usually prevalent among the Christian denominations of the Western States, except in the smaller places. And it must still further be said that a certain lack of fastidiousness and an occasional lack of refinement in speech, a strong preference for the coarser word if it happened to be the more expressive, belonged to Henry Ward Beecher, and probably gave less offense in his Western life than it did in later years when he became the pastor of a metropolitan church.

Mr. Beecher always remembered with tender affection the early years of his ministry, "in that glorious, rich, warm, abundant Western country." His sister, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, has written: "The West, with its wide, rich, exuberant spaces of land, its rolling prairies garlanded with rainbows of ever-springing flowers, teeming with abundance of food for man, and opening in every direction avenues for youthful enterprise and hope, was to him a morning-land. To carry Christ's spotless banner in high triumph through such a land, was a thing worth living for, and, as he rode on horseback alone from day to day along the rolling prairie-land, sometimes up to his horse's head in grass and waving flowers, he felt himself kindled with a sort of ecstasy. The prairies rolled and blossomed in his sermons, and his style at this time had a tangled luxuriance of poetic imagery, a rush and abundance of words, a sort of rich and heavy

involution that resembled the growth of a tropical forest." <sup>1</sup>

He preached his closing sermon to the people of Lawrenceburg July 28th, 1839, and removed at once with his family to Indianapolis, the capital of the Hoosier State, where he was to remain through eight happy and useful years. The city, which now has a population of one hundred and twenty-five thousand, had then less than four thousand inhabitants, and it may be said that its chief attractions were mud and malaria. The inhabitants of what is now one of the most beautiful and famous of Western towns, then carried on a daily battle with dirt and fever. In his reminiscences of the city he wrote: "At no time during my residence did it reach five thousand (in population). Behold it to-day with one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants! The Great National Road which at that time was of great importance, since sunk into forgetfulness, ran through the city and constituted the main street. With the exception of two or three streets there were no ways along which could not be seen the original stumps of the forests. I bumped against them too often in a buggy not to be sure of the fact. Here I preached my first real sermon." And, writing of the church building which his congregation entered soon after his coming, and which was standing in 1877 he said: "No one can look upon that building as I do. A father goes back to his first house, though it be but a cabin, where his children were born, with feelings that can never be transferred to any other place. As I looked long and yearningly upon that homely build-

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 547.



ing the old time came back again. . . . I stood and . . . saw a procession of forms going in and out, that the outward eye will never see again—Judge Morris, Samuel Merrill, Oliver H. Smith, D. V. Cully, John L. Ketcham, Coburn, Fletcher, Bates, Bullard, Munsell, Ackley, O'Neil and many, many more! There have been hours when there was not a hand-breadth between us and the saintly host in the invisible church!"<sup>1</sup>

The Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis was an offshoot from the First. The separation had been occasioned by the prevailing theological disputes. Two ministers had been sought for and called by the Church before Mr. Beecher was invited. When he came as their pastor he was twenty-six years of age, and the eight years which he spent with this people were of measureless importance because they shaped in large degree his future style and method of preaching. Some of his parishioners deemed him at that time the greatest preacher to whom they had ever listened. One of them writes an account of his immense industry, his early rising, the simplicity of his prayers at family worship, the breadth of his ideas, his fidelity in his work even when, on account of the malarial infliction with which he suffered, he could hardly stand up and would fall from exhaustion as soon as he entered the door of his own house.

Another recalls the immediate success of his ministry, the increase of the congregation, so that the chapel where he first preached became too small and it was necessary that a church be built for him. He writes

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 206, 7, 8.

of the attractiveness of the musical services in the new edifice, and contrasts the preacher in the Second Presbyterian Church with the "distinguished divine," in the First Presbyterian Church on the opposite side of the Circle, the Rev. Phineas D. Gurley, who was Mr. Lincoln's pastor at Washington. He recalls Mr. Beecher's fondness for young men and his habit of entering into friendly companionship with his people, often taking long strolls with those whom he wished to capture. "His church was crowded every Sabbath, both by his own congregation and by visitors from other and distant churches. Although the pew system obtained, at least one-fourth of the seats (one entire section) was reserved for young men and strangers. Among them may be named the judges of the Supreme, Federal, and Local Courts."<sup>1</sup> Although he was the pastor of the New-School Church, he always cherished some of his warmest and truest friends among the families in the Old School.

Mr. Beecher found that the Gospel of Christ as he had learned it from a careful study of the Evangelists, and as it had been burned into his soul by the heat of a great experience, was adequate to the difficult and multiform work to which his life was henceforth to be devoted. The truth of God's love in Christ could be turned by him in every direction. But the adaptation of Divine truth in an effective way was to him a slow discovery. He says of himself: "I remember distinctly that every Sunday night I had a headache. I went to bed every Sunday night with a vow registered that I would buy a farm and

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 186.

quit the ministry." How to adapt his truth to his hearers was a discovery resulting from the careful examination of the teaching and practice of the Apostles. He learned that they laid "a foundation first of historical truth common to them and their auditors; that this mass of familiar truth was then concentrated upon the hearers in the form of an intense application and appeal; that the language was not philosophical and scholastic, but the language of common life." He determined to try a similar method, and was made jubilant that the Gospel message was given power to touch and renew many souls. He says: "I owe more to the Book of Acts and the writings of the Apostle Paul than to all other books put together." He began a more earnest study of men, and came to value sermons only for their useful effects. He had learned what must be his way of preaching. "After the light dawned, I could see plainly how Jonathan Edwards's sermons were so made."

It is a mistake to suppose that Mr. Beecher lacked careful and thorough preparation for his work, or that his greatness was due mainly to his immense natural genius. He once said: "No man can preach well except out of an abundance of well-wrought material." During the years of his intense and formative Western experience, he made a thorough examination of the great English sermonizers, and also of Jonathan Edwards, whose words another eminent preacher of modern times, Robertson of Brighton, absorbed like iron into his blood. Mr. Beecher acknowledged his large indebtedness to Bishop Butler, to Thomas Sherlocke, to John Howe, the profound and contemplative Puritan preacher of

the seventeenth century, and to the celebrated divine and geometrician, Isaac Barrow, learned and logical, if clumsy in style. And he read Robert South "through and through." It lends an additional interest to the massive and pungent sermons of Clarendon's chaplain and Charles the First's staunch apologist, to remember that these discourses were pored over with a devout and admiring attention by our young Puritan preacher of the American backwoods, who had no sympathy with "passive obedience" and "the divine right of kings," and no inclination to stigmatize John Milton as "a blind adder who has split so much poison on the king's person and cause."

It was Mr. Beecher's habit through life never to write or speak except on themes which he had carefully and widely studied. His preparation was usually general rather than special. He had a large acquaintance with subjects that were to be treated, and he had marvelous facility in utilizing for special occasions, as in his great campaign in England in 1863, the stored-up results of long and thorough study. Another element of his usefulness was the rich common sense which he brought to the valuation of truth. He varied the emphasis and the kind of his religious teaching according to the circumstances and conditions which confronted him. In the West with its heterogeneous population and loose ideas of law and excess of individualism, he insisted upon authority, obedience, the usefulness and necessity of churches and forms and Sabbath days. But, as he says when he was transferred to the East and found society hard-ribbed and vigorous and

tyrannical, he "fought society, and tried to get individual men to be free, independent, and large."

After the new light which came to him from the study of Apostolic methods, revivals soon began to bless his Church, and three of these "times of refreshing" from on high, were exceedingly fruitful. Nearly one hundred were brought into his Church in 1842. He remembered these periods with a trembling and tearful enthusiasm of joy. "Talk of a young mother's feelings over her first babe," he wrote, "what is that compared with the solemnity, the enthusiasm, the impetuosity of gratitude, of humility, of singing gladness, with which a young pastor greets the incoming of his first revival? He stands upon the shore to see the tide come in. It is the movement of the infinite, ethereal tide! It is from the other world!" Large prosperity attended his ministry in Indianapolis, the Church increasing eight-fold. He was indefatigable in his work, preaching during one year seventy nights in succession. His labors extended to many of the chief towns of the State. Persons who were present during the famous Brooklyn Council of 1876, will recall with what tenderness, in his great sermon on Sunday morning, he referred to those whom he had led to Christ in his wide Western ministry, and who, he believed, were to give him a choral welcome at the gate of Heaven.

With peculiar interest he remembered the revival at Terre Haute. That highland of the Wabash, once the dividing line between Canada and Louisiana, was to him a region not of geographical but of deepest spiritual significance. One of his characteristic and morbid experiences was con-

nected with this revival. He had been sent for by the Rev. Dr. Jewett to come and assist him at Terre Haute. The call made him helpless and wretched, and his two days' lonely ride on horseback through the beech forests was continued in a state of mental unrest and bewilderment. But he records that so soon as he was confronted with the duty of the hour, the cloud was lifted and the morbid drooping and shrinking were gone. After three happy weeks, crowned with great success, he found it hard to go back to the common routine of Church life, and, as he returned to Indianapolis, he passed through a season of wild, tumultuous emotion which ended at last in peace and assurance, leading to a summer of fruitful toil among his own people. During his earlier years Mr. Beecher, as already intimated, seemed to have little confidence in himself. "For the first three years of my ministry," he once said "I did not make a single sinner wink." This lack of self-confidence and lack of a certain kind of success occasioned a degree of morbidness so intense that he frequently requested his wife not to attend his meetings. But the miserable self-distrust usually disappeared when he rose to speak, and he generally returned home from his work in a joyful frame of mind.

Living in the saddle, riding "from camp-meeting to camp-meeting and from log hut to log hut," almost the only book this revivalist found time to study was the Bible, and he made a renewed and careful examination of the Gospels, with great toil compiling analyses of their teachings. They became incorporated into himself. His younger brother Charles, who afterwards gained high repute as a preacher, had aban-

done the ministry on account of his restless mental questionings. He lived near to Henry Ward Beecher in Indianapolis, and it is recorded that the experience of a revival and the studies that came from teaching a Bible-class led him to reëxamine the life of the Son of God, and were the means of preparing him to reënter the Gospel ministry. By this large and constant attention to the Christian Scriptures Henry Ward Beecher was gaining not only a new conception of the nature of God but a new repugnance to "metaphysical doctrines." The truth of personal experience, of immediate practical helpfulness, was the truth most dear to one who became intimate with every family in his Church. This sort of friendly intimacy was not a difficult achievement in a Western town, where the people made the pastor one of their own household and furnished him food and clothing to eke out his salary. He was a playfellow with the young, and a teacher of unusually stimulating power to a class of girls, whom he directed in their reading, attracting them toward the poetry of Milton, and warning them against Bulwer and the French novelists.

## CHAPTER X.

### A SICK HOUSEHOLD. A STRONG PULPIT.

His fame as a preacher began to extend beyond the bounds of his parish. The members of the State Legislature were attendants in large numbers on his ministry, and the men from the great Eastern cities were drawn to take notice of his remarkable pulpit power. While attending a meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly, in Buffalo, he made a fervid address on the subject of "Slavery," of such originality and vigor that it attracted wide attention. He was a trustee of that excellent institution, which has trained many of the best Western preachers, Wabash College at Crawfordsville, Indiana, and his personal knowledge of the needs of Christian education in the newer States made him an enthusiastic and useful friend of small Western colleges.

The amount and quality of his work at this time became all the more remarkable when we remember the almost continual sickness which afflicted members of his family. He had been told that Indianapolis, unlike Lawrenceburg, was free from that frightful plague of Western frontier life, chills and fever. Being anxious for his wife, whose health was not at that time strong, and for his little daughter, he was



deeply stirred on discovering, after arriving at Indianapolis, that the inhabitants of that place, or at least some of them, had grossly misrepresented the salubrity of their climate. Within a short time Mr. and Mrs. Beecher were both taken with the prevailing distemper. Severe sickness followed, and although he recovered his former strength the old trouble in a milder form frequently returned.<sup>1</sup>

The salary of six hundred dollars did not relieve the Beecher family from domestic anxiety. They moved from place to place in the town till they made their home at last in a one-story house which Mr. Beecher was to purchase gradually, paying for it at the rate of a hundred dollars a year. Though the bedrooms were small and the kitchen small, they lived in this house seven years and deemed it the happiest home they ever knew. Mr. Beecher vibrated incessantly between kitchen and study. Mrs. Beecher, frequently sick, was kept much of the time from church. Her time was divided between chills and household work. With his study-table and the cooking-table separated only by a thin partition, it is no wonder that Mr. Beecher became very well known to his own family. There is a picturesque rudeness and simplicity about the scenes of his life in Indianapolis that have been painted for us. We see him helping in all family offices, though continually tempted to postpone the washing of dishes; we see him wading to church "ankle-deep in mud" and preaching with his pantaloons stuffed into his boot-tops; we see him painting his own house as

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<sup>1</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, December, 1891.

he painted his father's on Walnut Hills, and developing a degree of self-helpfulness that must appear to many quite extraordinary.

During these years in Indianapolis he passed through some of those sorrows which helped him in after-times to abound richly in sympathy with those burdened with grief. There was the accidental shooting of his brother George, followed in 1846 by the death of George, his third son. Few incidents come home to the universal heart more touchingly than that which Mr. Beecher described in speaking of the burial of this little child—how he waded through the snow, carrying the little coffin in his arms, and seeing winter down at the very bottom of the grave. "If I should live a thousand years," he said, "I could not help shivering every time I thought of it." A friend recalls a sermon of Mr. Beecher's and words spoken to this effect: "People sometimes ask me how I am able to sympathize with parents in their sorrows. Have I not buried my own heart again and again in the grave?"

While in Indianapolis, Mr. Beecher found relief from domestic annoyances and afflictions and from the excessive toils of his preaching life, and he found also unspeakable delight, as well as rich materials for a bewildering variety of illustrations for his future sermons, in a renewed and sympathetic study of flowers. He utilized his fragments of spare time and gained a mental refreshment which was greatly needed after eighteen consecutive months of daily preaching, by the continued reading of Loudon's Encyclopædic works on Horticulture, Agriculture, and Architecture. He believed that he had read every

line of these great volumes which he found immensely fascinating. Gray's "Structural Botany" and Lindley's "Horticulture" were added, and later, the London *Gardener's Chronicle*. "Many hundred times" he says, "have we lain awake for hours, unable to throw off the excitement of preaching, and beguiling the time with imaginary visits to the Chiswick Gardens, to the more than Oriental magnificence of the Duke of Devonshire's grounds at Chatsworth. We have had long discussions at Indianapolis, with Van Mons about pears, with Vibert about roses, with Thompson and Knight of fruits and theories of vegetable life, and with Loudon about everything under the heavens in the horticultural world."

He was more than a closet botanist and gardener. Believing thoroughly in manual work, he tilled his own garden, grew his own flowers, and often, at the dawn of day, took his own vegetables to market. He also carried off first prizes at an exhibition of the Indiana Horticultural Society. Though he had done some newspaper writing at Cincinnati, in Indianapolis he "first joined the editorial fraternity and edited the *Farmer and Gardener*." In the columns of that journal he gave the Western farmers much good advice mixed with much rare humor. Thus unconsciously he was preparing himself for the battle of the giants which was to follow in those days when, as the editor of the *New York Independent*, he easily took a front rank among the journalists of his time. Mr. Beecher was known as a mild Whig while in Indianapolis. The anti-slavery fight was soon to make him an Abolitionist, though not training with the Garrison party.

Texas had been annexed, and the wicked Mexican War, undertaken for the extension of slavery, was in progress. The mighty contestants were making ready for the great Congressional struggles of 1850, and for the more terrible strifes of armies that lay beyond. Slavery had become a burning question, and though the hostility to Abolitionism was probably hotter in the Middle and Eastern States than in the West, even in Indianapolis, the subject of slavery was a dividing one. Men were red-hot with regard to it, and Mr. Beecher reports that one of his elders said: "If an Abolitionist comes here, I will head a mob and put him down." Those were the days of excessive timidity. The chief men of the North hated Abolitionism far more than they hated the driver's whip or the auction-block. Missionary societies were quite as timid as capitalists, and tore anti-slavery pages out of their publications. It is a notable evidence of Mr. Beecher's practical wisdom that he was able to speak on this subject with no uncertain sound, and yet ultimately to retain in large measure his strong hold on his people.

Toward the close of his ministry in the West, his Presbytery voted to request the Presbyterian clergymen to preach at least one sermon during the year on the subject of slavery. Mr. Beecher thought it fit to preach three sermons on this topic. In the first of these he spoke of ancient slavery, especially among the Hebrews, in the second he presented the doctrine and practice of the New Testament in respect to slavery, and in the final sermon he discussed the

moral aspects of slavery, attacking the gigantic evil with characteristic earnestness. As he doubtless expected, his words aroused the wrath of the pro-slavery church-members and the excited fears of the timid, some of whom went so far as to seek for letters of dismissal from the Church. The town was full of excitement. Judge McLean, of the United States Supreme Court, was one among Mr. Beecher's many listeners, and he admired the manly boldness of the outspoken preacher. When he remarked to an excited group of Hoosiers: "If every minister in the United States would be as faithful it would be a great advance in settling this question," he did much to turn the tide of feeling. With further deliberation men began to see things differently, and Mr. Beecher found himself able in his youth, as so often in his manhood, to note the tide turning his way, and as usual his temporary disrepute was followed by higher admiration and esteem.

The fearless preacher had many evils to attack besides slavery, and he had no hesitation in rebuking the prevailing sins. After he had denounced from the pulpit an act of brutality, committed by a notorious man of the city, his people feared lest he should suffer bodily injury from the irate offender. And indeed the next morning the angry sinner encountered him, as he passed the hotel, and, pistol in hand, demanded if he made those remarks, and if they were directed against him. Mr. Beecher replied affirmatively, when the ruffian said, with an oath: "Take it back right here or I'll shoot you on the spot." "Shoot away," was the calm reply, as Mr. Beecher walked on. The bully followed him for a few steps and then

slunk back to the hotel. On another occasion at a meeting for the enforcement of the law against the gamblers and liquor-sellers who were doing much to ruin many of his young men, Mr. Beecher denounced one of the criminals, who was present, to his very face. The ruffian threatened to whip him at the next encounter. Meeting him soon after Mr. Beecher bowed and said "Good morning, Mr. Bishop," and passed on. A year or two later this man opened his whole heart to the brave pastor and rendered him personal service.

The temptations at the State capital were so terrible and numerous that the young preacher became distressed for the souls of imperiled youth. All the vices flourished in rank luxuriance, and Mr. Beecher determined to meet these evils with a series of addresses to young men. First he made a careful study of the arts and devices by which the young are led to moral ruin. The result was a series of lectures to young men, afterwards published, which for boldness, insight, and tropical eloquence have probably never been equaled. Friends of Lyman Beecher recalled the spirit which blazed forth in his six sermons against intemperance. Dr. Leonard Bacon in every discourse "seemed to see sparks as from the red-hot iron on the old anvil, and to hear the old Boanerges thunder with a youthful voice." The immediate effect of these lectures, however strong and salutary, was small compared with the wider effects produced by their publication and large circulation, both in England and America. Mr. Beecher was slow in heeding the urgent requests of his friends to revise and print these discourses. When he compared them

with the sermons of Dr. Isaac Barrow, he was so impressed with the inferiority of his own work that he took up his manuscript and "fired it across the room and under the book-case," where it lay untouched for awhile. Mr. Beecher rarely "had the patience to revise" which Mr. Spurgeon utilized for many years with such advantage to the whole English-speaking world.

It is fortunate that Mr. Beecher's addresses to young men, so fresh and vital, so full of power and splendor, of humor, indignation, originality of thought, and careful observation, were not left under the book-case. As we re-read the volume to-day it appears as true to life as when the words were first spoken. Its reality makes to a large degree its power. He discusses idleness in all its forms, and, with no commonplaceness of thought or expression, he portrays the perils and punishments of indolence. He speaks of dishonesty and tells of its causes. He utters his solemn warnings against the thought that riches necessarily confer happiness; against a wicked haste to be rich; against covetousness; against the canker of selfishness; against covert dishonesty and against violent extortion.

What a picture he has given of the Behemoth of Rapacity! "Men there are, who, without a pang or gleam of remorse, will coolly wait for a character to rot, and health to sink, and means to melt, that they may suck up the last drop of the victim's blood. Our streets are full of reeling wretches whose bodies and manhood and souls have been crushed and put to the press that monsters might wring out of them a wine for their

infernal thirst. The agony of midnight massacre, the frenzy of the ship's dungeon, the living death of the middle passage, the wails of separation, and the dismal torpor of hopeless servitude—are these found only in the piracy of the slave-trade? They are all among us. Worse assassinations! Worse dragging to a prison ship! Worse groans ringing from the fetid hold! Worse separations of families! Worse bondage of intemperate men, enslaved by that most inexorable of all task-masters, sensual habit!"

— Then who can fail to remember the pictures in Beecher's Portrait Gallery, the Wit, the Humorist, the Cynic, the Libertine, the Politician, the Demagogue, the Party Man? The Gambler's character is depicted with the terrible power and realism of Hogarth, and with more than his splendor. The evils of gambling in ruining the mind, in destroying domestic affection, in its affiliation with other vices, in its provocation of thirst and its inevitable connection with dishonesty have never been set forth with more vividness nor has any other homilist pointed out more clearly the peril of the first imperceptible steps to wickedness.

— "Oh ye who have thought the way to hell was bleak and frozen as Norway, parched and barren as Sahara, strewed like Golgotha with bones and skulls, reeking with stench like the vale of Gehenna,—witness your mistake! The way to hell is gorgeous! It is a highway, cast up; no lion is there, no ominous bird to hoot a warning, no echoings of the wailing pit, no lurid gleams of distant fires, or moaning sounds of hidden woe! Paradise is imitated to build you a way to death; the flowers of Heaven are stolen and poisoned; the sweet plant of knowledge is here; the



pure white flower of religion; seeming virtue and the charming tints of innocence are scattered all along like native herbage. The enchanted victim travels on. Standing far behind, and from a silver trumpet, a Heavenly messenger sends down the wind a solemn warning: **THERE IS A WAY WHICH SEEMETH RIGHT TO MAN BUT THE END THEREOF IS DEATH.** And again, with louder blast: **THE WISE MAN FORESEETH THE EVIL; FOOLS PASS ON AND ARE PUNISHED.** Startled for a moment, the victim pauses; gazes round upon the flowered scene, and whispers 'Is it not harmless?'—'Harmless,' responds a serpent from the grass!—'Harmless' echoes the sighing winds; 'Harmless' reëcho a hundred airy tongues. If now a gale from Heaven might only sweep the clouds away through which the victim gazes; Oh! if God would break that potent power which chains the blasts of hell, and let the sulphur scent roll up the vale, how would the vision change! The road becomes a track of dead men's bones. The heavens a lowering storm. The balmy breezes, distant wailing—and all those balsam-shrubs that lied to the senses, sweat drops of blood upon their poison-boughs."

"Ye who are meddling with the edges of vice, ye are on this road!—and utterly duped by its enchantments! Your eye has already lost its honest glance, your taste has lost its purity, your heart throbs with poison! The leprosy is all over you, its blotches and eruptions cover you. Your feet stand on slippery places, whence in due time they shall slide if you refuse the warning which I raise. They shall slide from that Heaven never to be visited by a gambler; slide down

to that fiery abyss below you out of which none ever come. Then, when the last card is cast, and the game over, and you lost; then, when the echo of your fall shall ring through hell,—in malignant triumph, shall the Arch-Gambler, who cunningly played for your soul, have his prey! Too late you shall have looked back upon life as a Mighty Game, in which you were the stake, and Satan the winner."

We may search in vain in literature for any equally lurid portrayal of the folly of so-called harmless sins. There are pages in these lectures that remind one of the most sensational and terrible scores of Berlioz and Wagner. Some of these are found in the chapter on "The Strange Woman" and others in the final lecture on "Popular Amusements," which closes with the famous and terrible apostrophe to the corrupter of youth. "I would not take thy death for all the pleasure of thy guilty life a thousandfold. Thou shalt draw near to the shadow of death. To the Christian, these shades are the golden haze which Heaven's light makes when it meets the earth and mingles with its shadows. But to thee, these shall be shadows full of phantom-shapes. Images of terror in the Future shall dimly rise and beckon; the ghastly deeds of the Past shall stretch out their skinny hands to push thee forward! Thou shalt not die unattended. Despair shall mock thee. Agony shall tender to thy parched lips her fiery cup. Remorse shall feel for thy heart, and rend it open. Good men shall breathe freer at thy death, and utter thanksgiving when thou art gone. Men shall place thy gravestone as a monument and testimony that a plague is stayed; no tear shall wet it, no mourners linger there! And, as

borne on the blast, thy guilty spirit whistles through the gate of hell, the hideous shrieks of those whom thy hand hath destroyed, shall pierce thee—hell's first welcome. In the bosom of that everlasting storm which rains perpetual misery in hell, shalt thou, *Corrupter of Youth!* be for ever hidden from our view: And may God wipe out the very thoughts of you from our memory.”<sup>1</sup>

His “Lectures to Young Men” is said to have been the first book by an Indiana author, to be honored by a republication in Great Britain. Mr. Beecher's voice was to be heard again in England, and, with matured powers, he was to champion the cause of American liberty and nationality. The change in the style of speech between those florid and over-languaged lectures in the Hoosier city and the keen, swift, straightforward sentences which he shot, like arrows, at the mob in Liverpool, is a most interesting study and a remarkable illustration, not only of Mr. Beecher's intellectual growth, but of that consummate genius which speaks the right word in the right way.

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<sup>1</sup> “Lectures to Young Men,” p. 251.

## CHAPTER XI

### CALL TO BROOKLYN. EARLY REVIVALS.

MR. BEECHER's ten years of Western life were his rough, varied, and wholesome schooling for the much larger opportunities soon to open before him. His great nature had expanded and ripened in the intense and many-sided exertions of that interesting experience. His heart was in the West, but Mrs. Beecher had been sick almost continually and did not take kindly to Hoosier life as it then was. The beautiful city of Indianapolis, as it now is, was not the city one hundred and twenty thousand, was not the city of chills and fevers with which she was familiar. Her health had been so seriously impaired that Mr. Beecher was finally persuaded, in 1847, to accept a call extended by the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York. Dr. Lyman Beecher was strongly and almost sternly opposed to his son's going East. Henry Ward Beecher believed that if God had work for him in a different sphere of activity He would make it as plain to him as He did to Abraham. He had no thought or purpose of seeking a new field of work, but he wrote that he had an immovable plan in regard to the objects which he should pursue.

“So help me God, I do not mean to be a *party man*, nor to head nor follow any partisan effort; I desire to

aid in a *development of truth* and in the production of *goodness* by it. I do not care in *whose hands* truth may be found, or in what communion; I will thankfully take it of *any*. Nor do I feel bound in any sort to look upon untruth or mistake with favor because it lies within the sphere of any Church to which I may be attached. I do not have that mawkish charity which seems to arise from regarding all tenets as pretty much alike—the charity, in fact, of *indifference*—but another sort; a hunger for what is true, an exultation in the sight of it, and such an estimate and glory in the truth as it is in Christ, that no distinction of sect or form shall be for one moment worthy to be compared with it. I will overleap anything that stands between me and truth. Whoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in *sincerity* and *in truth* is my *brother*. He that doeth God's will was, in Christ's judgment, His mother, His sister, His brother, His friend, His disciple." <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher's genius was recognized by a limited circle in the East. Mr. Wm. T. Cutter, of Brooklyn, one of the fathers of Plymouth Church, had visited him in the West in the autumn of 1846, and to this ardent believer in Mr. Beecher great credit is due for his labors in securing Plymouth Church its illustrious pastor. Mr. Beecher had been informed that a new Congregational Church was to be organized in Brooklyn, and that the property formerly owned by the First Presbyterian Church, of which the famous Dr. Samuel Hanson Cox was pastor, had been purchased, and that if he would accept a call given by this

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 212.

new congregation, a salary of fifteen hundred dollars, and probably of two thousand dollars, would be given him. Mr. Beecher was unwilling even to consider the proposition, but he accepted an invitation to address the American Home Missionary Society that year at the May Anniversary in New York. Unsuspectingly he was caught in this trap prepared for him by William T. Cutter. This visit resulted in the formation of Plymouth Church, the chief promoters of the enterprise being David Hale of the *Journal of Commerce*, John T. Howard, and Henry C. Bowen. The idea which dominated the founders of this famous Church was "to combine the descendants of the Pilgrims in a new and more general movement to introduce democratic and Puritan principles and policy into ecclesiastical affairs."<sup>1</sup> The people were in solemn earnest, and faithful in their frequent meetings for prayer. One of the early members testifies that "if ever a church was founded in a thorough consciousness of weakness and with strong wrestling in prayer, with cries and tears before God, it was the Plymouth Church." Mr. Beecher preached for this people on his visit to New York, a discourse on "Man's Accountability to God." It was rigidly orthodox in its teachings and pungent and searching in its applications. In this sermon he said: "I know not what I will do when God calls my soul to judgment. I know when I shall look back on my life it will be folly to attempt to justify anything I have ever done. I will turn to Christ and say, 'Thou hast promised to save me if I would trust in Thee, and I

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<sup>1</sup> "Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 40.

have trusted in Thee and now I claim the fulfillment of Thy promise, O Lord! Here I am, and my only hope is in Thee.' And then Christ will throw around about me the shield of His righteousness, not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner, loved and shielded of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher would not consider a call to the Church which did not really exist, and which was houseless as well as non-existent. Accordingly, on Sunday evening, June 13, 1847, Plymouth Church was organized with a membership of twenty-one, on the very ground which was afterward occupied by the building which Mr. Beecher made famous in the annals of freedom, and which divides with the Old South Church of Boston the honor of being the historic Church of America. Rev. Richard S. Storrs, Jr., pastor of the Church of the Pilgrims, preached the sermon on this eventful occasion, and on the following day Mr. Beecher was unanimously invited by Church and society to become their pastor. He was not permitted to rest from considering this call. Mr. Bowen sent him nearly thirty letters urging his acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

All the arguments and inducements which were powerfully brought to bear upon him would very likely have utterly failed had it not been evident that Mrs. Beecher's health, and probably her life, were jeopardized by a longer abiding in the West. After two months of deliberation, during which he realized how loth he was to leave his "Indiana

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<sup>1</sup>"The History of Plymouth Church," by Noyes L. Thompson, p. 56. <sup>2</sup>"Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 90.

bishopric," he decided to relinquish his pastoral charge in Indianapolis, and in a letter of great tenderness directed to the Elders of the Second Presbyterian Church, he gave in his resignation. Seven days later he wrote to the committee of Plymouth Church an acceptance of their call, expressing his diffidence in regard to the responsibilities of the new field and also his perfect trust in the Saviour he was to preach. On breaking up his home he distributed among a half dozen friends the rare plants and precious exotics which he had gathered, and also left with them the fragrance of a loving and consecrated life, whose memory lingers still in the traditions of the city.

He had received and declined a call from the famous Park Street Church, Boston, in the summer of 1847. He preferred to build on new foundations. Aided by the characteristic generosity of Plymouth Church he was enabled to pay his debts in Indianapolis, and removed with his family in October to Brooklyn. One of the founders of Plymouth Church, Mr. John T. Howard, writes of the great joy which his letter of acceptance brought to Brooklyn.<sup>1</sup>

"It would probably seem rather a comical sight to the younger members of the Church to see Mr. Bowen and myself in each other's arms, crying and laughing and capering about like a couple of schoolboys; yet that sight might have been seen the evening that Mr. Bowen came to my house with a letter which he had received from Mr. Beecher, It was sealed with one of those little picture seals of

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<sup>1</sup> Howard's "Life," pp. 131-132.



paper in vogue in those days. The picture was a gate thrown from its fastenings, and the motto 'I am all unhinged.' That told the story, and the result we are rejoicing over during this happy week."<sup>1</sup>

When we consider the immense consequences to the political and religious history of America resulting from this transfer, we are reminded of Abraham Lincoln's departure, fourteen years later, from another Western capital to enter upon the solemn duties of the Presidency. Mr. Beecher's journey, however, was unheralded and uneventful, although interesting from the fact that he is said to have left Indianapolis on the first passenger train which was run on a recently built railroad. Mrs. Beecher was doubtless overjoyed in the hope of restored health, although if the incident be true, the journey was not one of unmixed pleasure. It is said that Mr. Beecher, youthful and happy, was exceedingly attentive to the delicate and sad-faced wife who had so long been an invalid. He jumped from the train at one of the stations to provide for her bodily needs. But an old lady, attracted by Mrs. Beecher's miserable looks, said to her with encouraging sympathy: "Cheer up, my dear madam, cheer up. Surely whatever may be your trial, you have cause for great thankfulness to God who has given you such a kind and attentive son."

The Brooklyn of 1847 was a village compared with the splendid city of to-day. All the churches are said to have been within a mile of Fulton Ferry, and boys are reported to have picked blackberries within a quarter of a mile of the present City Hall, before

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<sup>1</sup> "Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 51.

which the bronze statue of Henry Ward Beecher now stands. The leading preachers in the City of Churches in 1846 were: the Rev. H. S. Spencer, D. D., the vigorous and argumentative pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church; the eloquent and stately Dr. Francis Vinton, of the Emmanuel Church; the Rev. S. T. Spear, of the South Presbyterian Church; Dr. J. S. Stone, of Christ Church; the Rev. M. W. Jacobus, of the First Presbyterian Church; the Rev. M. W. Dwight, of the First Dutch Church; the Rev. S. M. Woodbridge of the South Dutch Church; the Rev. Jacob Brodhead, D. D., of the Central Dutch Church; the Rev. B. B. Cutler, D. D., of St. Ann's Protestant Episcopal Church; the Rev. George Duffield, of the Fifth Presbyterian Church; the learned and eccentric Dr. Samuel Hanson Cox, "with mind like an auroral heaven"; and the youthful pastor of the Church of the Pilgrims, then the Rev. Richard S. Storrs, Jr., who still holds on in his radiant way, the undisputed master among living Americans of all the graces and powers of the loftiest pulpit eloquence.

It was greatly feared by many that Mr. Beecher, however successful he may have been as a Western missionary, would not be found adequate to the requirements of a cultivated Eastern city. They feared that his bold utterances and original ways, and especially his habit of outspoken denunciation on the subject of slavery, would never be tolerated in New York, the metropolis, of which Brooklyn, then a town of sixty thousand people, was the sleeping-room. It was prophesied that his career would be disastrously brief, and even friends and relatives appeared to doubt the results of his sudden change. But Mr. Beecher

came to Brooklyn with a stout heart and with a single thought—zeal for Christ—to preach what he understood to be the Gospel of Christ; and his first sermon on October 11, 1847, was directed to the Lord Jesus and His power as the source of all true religion. In the evening he plainly told his people that he had come to apply Christianity to intemperance, to slavery, and to all the great national sins, that he would apply it without stint and sharply and strongly, and that he was to wear no fetters and to be bound by no precedent. And, in spite of the warnings of fearful friends, he continued to announce his purpose and programme every year, especially just before the annual renting of pews. There were few churches within the bounds of New York and Brooklyn which at that time had the courage to speak a brave word for liberty. It is no wonder that a Church thus sifted, like Plymouth Church from the start, and consecrated by its great leader, should have become a landmark in the history of liberty and of civilization in the New World.

Mr. Beecher was publicly installed on the 11th of the following November. The examination of the candidate by the Council which had been summoned was extended and thorough. He proved unpleasantly rusty in his theology, and not up to the New England standard in his orthodoxy, but his wit was never lacking. To the question of Dr. Humphrey, who was his college President—"Do you believe in the preservance of the saints?" Mr. Beecher replied: "I was brought up to believe that doctrine, and I did believe it till I went out West and saw how Eastern Christians lived when they went out there. I

confess since then I have had my doubts." Though many of his answers were unexpected and startling, a unanimous vote sustained the examination. Dr. Bushnell said: "I am glad to find one candidate who knows the Lord Jesus and His Gospel."<sup>1</sup> Some of those who had part in the installation services were themselves men of high rank. Besides the Rev. Dr. Hewitt, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and the Rev. Dr. Lansing, of New York, there was the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, of Pittsfield, Mass., one of a distinguished family; there was the preacher of the sermon, the Rev. Dr. Edward Beecher, then of the Salem Church, Boston; there was Dr. Horace Bushnell of Hartford, who that year had published his masterly work on *Christian Nurture*; there was the Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, of the Broadway Tabernacle, of New York, the eminent scholar and later one of the chief editors of *The Independent*; and there was the Rev. Richard S. Storrs, Jr., of the Church of the Pilgrims, by one year Mr. Beecher's senior in service in Brooklyn, although eight years his junior in age.

A great metropolitan center, like New York and Brooklyn, was required for the unequalled career upon which Mr. Beecher was now to enter. Men have been great preachers in small places, as Edwards, Bushnell, Jeremy Taylor, Richard Baxter, Robertson, Kingsley, and many others abundantly witness. But, under the conditions of modern life, the successful leadership in political and religious reform which Mr. Beecher achieved was possible only in the conspicuity and far-reaching influence of a great commercial and

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<sup>1</sup>"Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 52.

intellectual capital like New York. The year 1847 is, therefore, a chief landmark in his life.

The saintly William Ellery Channing had passed away five years before. More than a year had elapsed since Theodore Parker had begun his prodigious labors in Boston, where he accomplished a notable work in arousing the Northern conscience in regard to slavery. Lowell was writing his unequalled and stinging satires, the First Series of the "Biglow Papers." George William Curtis was sauntering through Europe, and had not yet begun to exercise his gentle and yet powerful influence over the whole higher life of America. Horace Greeley had for six years been conducting *The New York Tribune*; Sumner had just begun his great anti-slavery work; Lincoln was serving his only term in Congress; Chase was acting as attorney-general for runaway negroes, and Garrison and Phillips were leading the forlorn hope of Abolitionism. In the year following John Quincy Adams, the champion of the right of petition in Congress, was to close his great career.

Those who were famous men in the pulpit of that day have nearly all of them fallen into obscurity. The elaborate and eloquent portrayal of that time, or more accurately of the year previous, which Dr. Richard S. Storrs has given in his Memorial Sermon on the Church of the Pilgrims, preserves a great number of names lustrous in their own community during their lives, which stir but few memories in a younger generation. Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler had graduated from Princeton Seminary, but had not yet been ordained to the ministry. Other eminent pastors and preachers, dear to the hearts of this gen-

eration, were then boys at school. The name of Henry Ward Beecher has grown, in spite of temporary obscurations, more potent and luminous with the passing years, not only because of his preëminent genius, but also from the fact that his career became intimately identified with what the Duke of Argyle has pronounced the "greatest cause which, in ancient or modern times, has been pleaded at the bar of the moral judgment of mankind."

Recalling the anti-slavery crusade, Mr. Beecher once described as the "greatest work of the modern century, the emancipation of the slaves in America, by which the industry of the Continent was also emancipated, and by which the Church and Religion itself were saved from a worse than Babylonian captivity." In truth, those years of stormy agitation, in which he took a most conspicuous part, removed the chief danger to the American nationality, solidified free institutions, kindled a new faith in God's overruling providence, enlarged the mental horizon of the New World, lifted the American Republic out of many prejudices and provincialisms, created American literature, raised the moral tone of the masses, brought America into active sympathy with the best thought of the Old World, liberated a race, and began their preparation for the redemption of the African Continent.

There is no equipment for the never-ending work of reform more needful than the vivid sense of individual responsibility which ought to be felt by every citizen of a free commonwealth. As Mr. Beecher said: "Each individual citizen is responsible to the degree of influence which he has, and if he does not

exert it he is responsible for a neglect of duty—a binding duty. He is bound to create a public sentiment that shall work for virtue. He is bound to drain the community of all those evils that run together and form a channel for vice and crime.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher's enormous vitality, his immense and self-rectifying common sense, his wide sympathies with men of all classes, his indomitable energy and unflinching courage, his piercing wit and abounding humor, these were elements of power continually augmenting for more than thirty years, which fitted him marvelously well for the life of reformatory activity into which he had already entered. When we unite with these elements, as Dr. Richard S. Storrs said at the Plymouth Church Silver Wedding, “a somewhat vehement and combative nature, that always gets quickened and fired by opposition, as you have found, and that never is so self-possessed, so serene, and so victorious, as when the clamor is loudest around him and the fight is fiercest—and if you add very fixed and positive ideas on all the great ethical, social, and public questions of the time—there you have the champion reform-fighter of the last twenty-five years.”<sup>2</sup>

It was most fortunate that Mr. Beecher was able to yoke with him in his great life-work such a sympathetic and mighty auxiliary force as Plymouth Church, under his ministry, became. In reviewing twenty-five years of their history together he said: “It has always been my faith and feeling that the

<sup>1</sup>“Biography,” p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>“Plymouth Church Silver Wedding,” pp. 80-81.

great objects contemplated by the Gospel of Christ would fail of accomplishment if they were left chiefly to the hands of a professional clergy; that there never would be the work done that was necessary till the whole body of Christians became, as it were, ministers of Christ. And among the earliest things I had in my mind and heart when I first came was, May it please God to gather together here a body of Christian men and women who shall be, each in his several place, not simply a witness to the grace of God in his own heart, but a worker together with me in the dissemination of the Gospel. This desire has been answered; and there has been, for the last twenty-five years, in connection with Plymouth Church, a large and increasing band of devoted men and women. A more zealous or active body I have never known."

The Audience-room in which Mr. Beecher began his preaching in Brooklyn was rapidly filled to overflowing, and revivals of great power, accompanied by daily morning prayer-meetings, refreshed and strengthened the Church, so that in two years the membership had risen to over four hundred, more than one hundred and fifty uniting with the Church in the year 1848. Mr. Beecher to a degree equaled by few men in any generation, was filled with zeal for the conversion of men to Christ, and for their edification in Christian living. In him was a large measure of the Pauline spirit which led his father to say, that "the greatest thing in the world is to save souls."



## CHAPTER XII.

### A HISTORIC CHURCH.

MR. BEECHER was early thrust into the highest conspicuousness as a champion of liberty by a remarkable scene in which he appeared as a slave-auctioneer in 1848. The case of the Edmonson sisters drew the attention of the whole country. Their mother was a slave, and, after they had grown to womanhood, their mother's owner determined to send them from the City of Washington, where they had been living, down to New Orleans, where their beauty and attractiveness would bring him a large sum in the market. The girls made a desperate attempt to escape aboard the *Pearl* schooner; but the ship was taken and their pitiable story became known at the North. The heart-broken father, a free colored man, had gone to New York to raise the exorbitant sum which the owner demanded. "The old man was finally advised to go to Henry Ward Beecher and ask his aid. He made his way to the door of the great Brooklyn preacher's house, but, overcome by many disappointments and fearing to meet with another rebuff, hesitated to ring the bell, and sat down on the steps with tears streaming from his eyes."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher having heard his story, offered to do what he could.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," p. 179.

With others he spoke at a great meeting, held in the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, where the sum of two thousand two hundred dollars was raised by which the captives were set free. Probably in all his life he never delivered a more effective speech than that spoken on this occasion on which he made an impassioned appeal for the sisters in bondage ; "He extemporized there on the stage the auction of a Christian slave. The enumeration of his qualities by the auctioneer, and the bids that followed were given by the speaker in perfect character. He made the scene as realistic as one of Hogarth's pictures and as lurid as a Rembrandt."<sup>1</sup>

He described the qualities and excellencies, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, of the human chattel. "And more than all that, gentlemen, they say he is one of those praying Methodist niggers ; who bids ? A thousand—fifteen hundred—two thousand—twenty-five hundred ? Going, going ! The last call ? *Gone !*" It is said that the excitement which followed was frenzied and the money required flowed in like stream ; and Mr. Beecher thought that of all the meetings he ever attended none surpassed this "for a panic of sympathy."

Mrs. Stowe became personally responsible for the education of these liberated girls. In 1852 their old mother came North in order to rescue two other of her children from the slave-trader's clutches, and through the efforts of Mrs. Stowe a sufficient amount of money was raised for the liberation of the children and of the mother too. Such were some of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 292-293.

excitements and moral agitations which marked the beginning of Mr. Beecher's Eastern ministry. He had the enthusiastic sympathy of his people from the start, and their almost complete identification with the convictions and purposes of their pastor made them a force which vastly extended his influence.

Reviewing the beginnings of his own ministry in Brooklyn, he said: "I had a very strong impression on my mind that the first five years in the life of a Church would determine the history of that Church, and give to it its position and genius; that if the earliest years of a Church were controversial or barren, it would take scores of years to right it; but that if a Church were consecrated and active and energetic during the first five years of its life, it would probably go on for generations developing the same features. I went into this work with all my soul, preaching night and day, visiting incessantly, and developing, as fast and far as might be, that social, contagious spirit which we call a revival of religion." The history of Plymouth Church became one of great and frequent revivals, and, though the spiritual life was interrupted in part by great national excitements, there continued to be for many years not only a remarkable growth in numbers but also "a steady increase in the ratio of awakenings and conversions," and the pastor could say in 1872, "The last five years have been more fruitful than any equal period in our history." Among the most faithful and steadfast members were some who entered the Church during the first few months of his ministry.

The old church building was fortunately destroyed by fire, January 13, 1849. A large temporary taber-

nacle was soon built upon ground on Pierrepont street, offered to the society by that liberal-handed Christian and staunch friend of the slave, Mr. Lewis Tappan. A new and much larger structure was soon planned, and the corner-stone was laid on May 29, 1849. The new Plymouth Church with its Lecture-room and Sunday-school consisted of two buildings under a single roof and reached from Orange street through to Pineapple street. This building, the historic structure which now stands, was first used by the congregation on the opening Sunday of the year 1850.

Mr. Gladstone has said that the progress of civilization during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century probably surpassed the progress made in all the preceding ages, and that the progress of the next twenty-five years even outran the advancement achieved during the preceding fifty. With the opening of the new Plymouth Church in the closing year of the first half of the nineteenth century, a mighty moral force was made ready for the giant and swift victories of the coming age. For nearly forty years the voice that was heard within its walls carried messages of truth and inspiration to the ends of the civilized world. "Then began," it has been said, "that sound, once heard, never forgotten, and heard nowhere else so continuously, of the incoming multitude, the tread of hurrying feet like the sound of many waters, as the crowd, held back for a time until pew-holders have been in part accommodated, press in and take their places."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 225.

Drawn by gratitude, curiosity, admiration, they came from North and South, from the far East and the farther West, men, women, youth, children, of all convictions and conditions. From other lands they came year after year, with the preacher's widening fame, and it is probable that, except Westminster Abbey, no other Church of English-speaking nations has in this century been visited by so many men and women of renown.

The congregation which Mr. Beecher gradually drew about him was quite as representatively American as that gathered by any other pulpit orator in the United States. Besides the children of the Pilgrims and Puritans, the distinctively New England and Congregational elements, there were many from Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and other Protestant Churches, and not a few Catholics were friendly to the great-hearted Christian in Plymouth pulpit. There were in the congregation quite a number of eminent merchants and other business men of wide repute and success, some of them benevolent builders of colleges and libraries and large givers to missions, charities, and all other good works. The Church grew in the amount of its benevolent giving, not, of course, to the immense proportions of some of the wealthier congregations of New York, Boston, and Chicago, but still to such an extent that the pastor and people of Plymouth Church were beset by the eager and hungry solicitations of all kinds of holy beggars.

Mr. Beecher attracted to him great numbers of the younger business men of New York and Brooklyn, and in his congregation were found many college

graduates, school-teachers, lawyers, and physicians of reputation and scores of theological students. What may be called the great middle section of American society was thoroughly at home in Plymouth Church—the people who furnish the best materials for Christian propagandism and manifest the greatest fidelity to Christian duties. While Plymouth Church cared abundantly for the poor through its amply equipped Missions, the great body of its people were not from families oppressed with want or living on the narrowest competence. Though not numbering so large a percentage of the very rich as some of the other Churches of Brooklyn and New York, the intellectual and social rank of Plymouth Church was notably far higher than that, for example, of Mr. Spurgeon's great congregation in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Plymouth Church naturally became assimilated to the character and spirit of its large-minded, democratic, and earnest-hearted pastor. It was to a very unusual degree a congregation of men. But it was more than a congregation, held together by the magnetism of a great orator,—it was and is a Church of Jesus Christ, a brotherhood of believers in the Son of God, still doing, under its new leaders, Dr. Lyman Abbott and his associates, a very large Christian work in the changed conditions of a "down-town" Church.

During the greater years of Mr. Beecher's ministry, it would be hard to exaggerate the influence wielded by this large and effective organization of earnest, believing men and women. The membership of the Sunday-schools came to number three thousand; the membership of the Church was at one time more than

three thousand, while the entire population that looked to Plymouth Church as in some sense its spiritual head, numbered at one time not less than twelve thousand.

It was natural, from the relation of Plymouth Church and its pastor to great national events in the anti-slavery times and in the years of the Civil War, that there should be an unusual development of strong patriotic feeling in this famous congregation. The patriotism was not of any cheap or Fourth-of-July order, but was rather that deeper and purer love of the country and its flag which springs from a regard for liberty, justice, equality, and the higher elements of a Christian civilization. It was that love of country which is now so widely taught and inspired in our public schools, Sunday-schools, and Churches, and which has had such apt, forcible, and frequent expression in the addresses of Benjamin Harrison. In this development, as in other things, Plymouth Church was a noble pioneer, although a similar spirit burned in other Churches of the North.

Mr. Beecher always realized and often said that his congregation was not a mere temperance nor anti-slavery society, held together by a human leader. It was a thoroughly vitalized Christian Church, carrying on the same work which is done by other Churches, inspired, however, with new convictions with regard to the application of truth to the problems and perils of social and political life. In the years when the Church was most active in the anti-slavery trouble the sermons on slavery were comparatively infrequent. "My impression is," said Mr. Beecher, "that not, perhaps, more than once or twice in a year

was the subject of slavery made a matter of discourse; and that, perhaps with the exception of one or two periods of the year, the teaching and conversation of the Church turned upon the deeper themes of personal experience, and upon religion as it exists and is talked about in all our Christian bodies."<sup>1</sup>

Although living in tumultuous and stormy times Plymouth Church manifested an unusual degree of concord and fellowship, and the pastor attributed this union of spirit, in a Church where the largest liberty of opinion and of utterance was encouraged, to the effect of the exaltation of Divine love, the prominence given to the teaching of Christ. Whatever defects may be charged to it as an organization, and it was made up of fallible men and women, it should be remembered to the credit of Plymouth Church that it furnished the greatest of modern preachers the necessary medium of his chief contribution to the life of his own age and after generations. It was the object of his most prayerful solicitude and deepest love, and it should be recorded, not only to its renown but to the credit of human nature, that this Church stood as a wall of loving hearts around its trusted leader in the dark times of his awful agony and trial.

Scores of thousands now living cherish sacred memories of the building which housed this congregation, that plain structure, quite in contrast with the ornate and stately churches which America is now building, and with the statelier cathedrals of world-wide celebrity which give such beautiful dignity to the towns and cities of old England. The

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<sup>1</sup> "Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 64.



congregation worshiped in a building of exceeding plainness, almost barren of every ornamentation except that given by the majestic organ and the flower-decked pulpit platform. They expended large sums to beautify the mission schools, intended for the use of the poor, thus giving them a far better external equipment than they ever bestowed on themselves, but Plymouth Church though plain enough to satisfy the strictest Puritan was yet thoroughly adapted to the great purpose of preaching and hearing the Gospel. As an audience-room it was warmly praised by Charles Dickens and many others. The preacher's form and movements were not hidden behind a pulpit rampart and his vitality was not lost before it reached the first pew. The galleries were deep; the pews swept in a circle about the platform; the large volunteer choir and the great organ were back of the preacher; there was no broad central aisle to stare like an empty lane in the speaker's face. A sanctified good sense brought the speaker close to his hearers and quadrupled his effectiveness. Not only Henry Ward Beecher, but the matchless Abolition orator, Wendell Phillips, and scores of eminent men besides, found in Plymouth Church the opportunity for bringing their convictions to bear on the social and political life of their times. In the years of the War, the voice which spoke to eager throngs within its plain, white walls, reached the camp of the soldier on the Potomac and on the Tennessee and was heard from the coast of Maine to the Pacific shores. In a large measure it brought courage and gave direction to President, Cabinet, and Congress in many a critical hour of that momentous struggle.

The seating capacity of Plymouth Church, which was originally a little over two thousand, was augmented in 1857 by placing folding seats in the aisles, and by subsequent devices nearly three thousand people were accommodated with sitting or standing-room. Not infrequently in the evening as many were turned away as could enter. In 1850 it was an act of great faith to build anything so spacious as this structure for a youthful Church, but if, from the breaking out of the Civil War to the close of his life, Mr. Beecher had been accommodated with a far more spacious tabernacle in a more convenient and desirable location, he would easily have addressed audiences equal in number to those of Mr. Spurgeon, Canon Liddon, or Dr. Talmage. From 1858 to 1861 plans were formed and nearly consummated for building, in a new location, a much larger and more imposing structure, to cost about two hundred thousand dollars. But, owing to a variety of complications, the scheme was finally abandoned.

There are multitudes, not living in Brooklyn, who to-day think of Plymouth Church as the dearest and most cherished place that is haunted by their grateful memories. They can never forget the happy and homelike feeling with which they there sat in the company of eager and expectant worshipers. The white walls are dear to them from their very plainness. The great organ looms before their imagination as a magic storehouse of slumbering musical thunders or of flute-like and sweet-toned harmonies, awaiting the touch of the sympathetic master. They see the beaming face, in later years adorned with long white locks, of him to whom every eye is eagerly turned as

he ascends the platform, and, sometimes with an almost transfigured look, gazes over the inspiring throng. They still hear the echoes of the grand hymns in which pastor and congregation, choir and organ, all united until it seemed almost as if they were standing in the general assembly and Church of the First-born. They remember the hush which fell over the congregation as Mr. Beecher rose, and in quietest tones asked the Father's blessing. "Because Thou art good, and because Thou hast called unto our souls we have come to appear in Zion and before God. Now, what wait we for? Open Thine arms for us. Give forth from Thine heart that inspiration which shall make everything in us rise up and acknowledge our filial relation. With all our hearts and souls may we be able to call Thee our Father, and, this day, to rejoice somewhat in the contemplation of that realm of righteousness and wealth of joy which Thou hast for Thine Own Self, and for all that are heirs through Jesus Christ of Thy great salvation."<sup>1</sup>

They recall their gladness as he opened unto them the Scriptures, often making the hard places easy, and the dark places bright by his swift interpretative comment. They still hear those strangely sympathetic tones of voice with which he read many of the words of Moses or of Isaiah, of Paul or of the Divine Teacher. And then what a revelation of God's nearness and sympathy with men, what a sweet disclosure of the divineness of life came to the hushed thousands as Mr. Beecher uttered his memorable prayers, "sunning

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<sup>1</sup> "Book of Prayer," p. 89.

his thoughts and feelings in the light of God's face." Multitudes still feel that they have never elsewhere been so near to Heaven as when this servant of Christ was talking with the Lord and carrying the sorrows and troubles and perplexities of his people to the heart of the Father in Heaven.

Who can forget his prayers of thanksgiving? "And now our Father what can we say to Thee? What utterances of thanks can seem other than foolish by the side of such mercy?" "We are surrounded by the memorials and memories and testimonies of Thy goodness to us." "We desire, O God, no other service. Thy law is holy and just and good, and Thy service with its yoke and burden is more truly liberty and lightness than the freest service of the world and its sin. Then only do we feel ourselves without care when we are most entirely surrendered to the spirit and will of our Father in Heaven, when we feel that our life is flowing with Thine, that we are a part of the great scheme of redemption, that we are being borne in the bosom of the Church of Christ, that we are of them that are to be registered in Heaven."

And then how often they have felt it easier to bear burdens, as they entered into sympathy with him who prayed: "May we rejoice to suffer with Christ. May we esteem it more than all the treasures of Egypt. And, Lord Jesus, make us worthy to suffer for Thee, and make us worthy to have our names cast out for righteousness' sake." "O Thou Father, find Thy children to-day, and speak peaceable words to them. Comfort any that mourn over sin, and may their mourning do them good. Speak forgiveness to any

that scarcely dare to look into Thy face, and may they glance there to behold it, not as the darkness of life but as the glow of morning, full of hope and promise."

And how often their hearts were inspired with new courage for national conflicts! "Grant that in this great nation there may be none that will shrink from duty, none that shall fear to speak and act for truth and for liberty, none that shall retreat in the day of conflict, or stand indifferent, when Heaven and earth are commingled." And how tenderly he prayed for the whole world, over which his loving thoughts seemed to spread like the sunrise! "O bring this world at last to the bosom of Christ, and there may it find that anchorage and peace which it has so long sought in vain in its course."

They will not forget his prayers for the Church universal: "May Thy people vex each other less and less, distrust less and less, separate themselves less and less. Pour out Thy spirit upon all those things that are bringing Thy servants of every name together, and grant that this bond of a common love may grow stronger and stronger around the earth." How tenderly he prayed for himself and all tempted ones! "Ours is yet the warfare, we yet are in bodies that require our severest government; we are attempting to bring every thought and feeling in subjection to Jesus Christ's law; we are wrestling with pride that refuses coercion and watching selfishness that presses like a flood."

And how constantly through his prayers he brought them into sympathy with God, revealing the divine sympathy to them, and how he pictured, as if he saw it, the company of the redeemed in glory! "Thou

art gathering there multitudes which no man can number. From every age Thou hast garnered there; for us there is this hope and this joyful anticipation. We beseech of Thee that we may be able to live this life in the body with a constant faith of the great life of the Spirit; that we may never be discouraged nor beaten down; that we may know that we are the King's sons; though exiled, in disguise and poverty, and even cast into shame, may we remember our birthright, the pleasure that awaits us, the crown, the throne, the scepter, the glory of immortal and perpetual youth where Thou art. When the former things shall have passed away, when sorrow and dying shall have fled, when Thou shalt have wiped the tear from every eye, and when Thou dost comfort us even as a father comforts his child, then, in that blessed land where Thou dwellest, what will be the memory of the trouble that we have had on earth!"<sup>1</sup>

And who will ever forget, who knew it in its golden and wondrous prime, the varied and matchless powers of that eloquence of preaching which swept with angelic strength and splendor over the whole domain of human experience, and touched every chord of memory and hope, of reason and imagination, of playfulness and indignant passion, of self-sacrifice and of sympathy? It seemed at times as if all the powers of the great organ had been concentrated into a living man, through whom spake the living God, now uttering his voice in homelike familiarity, and then with the trumpet's most piercing and passionate notes, now with the plaintiveness of a child's

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<sup>1</sup> "Prayers from Plymouth Pulpit." "A Book of Prayer."

pleading cry and anon with a Miltonic sweep and grandeur of sound, like the thunderous music of the ocean shore.

What he himself has written in describing the prince of musical instruments, the organ, is an apt illustration of his own preaching at the highest. "The organ means majesty; it means grandeur. It means sweetness, to be sure, but it is sweetness in power. Whatever it has of sweetness, of fineness, or of delicacy, there is, moreover, an under-power that is like the sea itself. Running through all the various qualities of tone, as soft and as sweet as the song-sparrow (which is the sweetest bird that sings), and in its complexity rising through all gradations, imitating almost everything that is known of sounds on earth, it expresses at last the very thunder and the earthquake, and almost the final trumpet itself."

A study of Mr. Beecher's preaching must take a special chapter, but there are many who will value an attempt to record, even in the briefest way, some of the impressions which live in the memories of those who were wont to find in Plymouth Church a spiritual home, and in Henry Ward Beecher a prophet of God who thrilled them into a glad consciousness of their divinest possibilities.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE PRIVATE AND PEACEFUL MINISTRY.

IN order to secure any very vivid and adequately full impression of a life so unusually abundant in vitality and varied in effort, the student of Mr. Beecher will do well to fix his attention for a time on what may be called the more private and peaceful ministry of this great preacher and reformer ; on the incidents of his home life ; on the training and growth of his Church, and on the studies and experiences by which his nature was enriched, before he follows him into the great and stormy arena of national debate and strife. The word growth explains Mr. Beecher's personality and achievements almost as much as the word genius. The man of thirty-four who began his ministry in Brooklyn and made but a poor showing before his theological examiners at the time of his installation, is an intellectual stripling and tyro compared with the long-trained, experienced, and masterful man of fifty-nine, who instructed, delighted, and electrified famous theological professors and hundreds of Christian ministers in his "Yale Lectures on Preaching."

Mr. Beecher's education was largely along the lines of his daily work. His heart was sweetened and made still more sympathetic by domestic sorrow



in the first year of the Plymouth pastorate. By the death of his little girl (Caty) shortly after the Beechers came to Brooklyn, he was taught anew divine ministry of grief, and the hearts of pastor and people were wedded into a closer unity of feeling. "I was held up," he says, "by increasing love and sympathy on every side. Of *this world* I had more than heart could wish; of friends, never so many or so worth having; and the effect, as might be supposed, has answered to the cause. I find now that it is with me as with mountains in spring time—every fissure is growing to a rill, every patch of soil is starting its flowers, every shrub has its insect and every tree its bird."<sup>1</sup>

In order to minister to the ever-increasing wants of Plymouth Church Mr. Beecher needed to be a man of wide and incessant industry. The malign prophecy that he would hold out only six months might possibly have been a true one had he not continually, in his own way, fed the sources of his intellectual and spiritual productiveness. Some one has said that genius burns, but it needs fuel to keep it burning. John Bright regarded it as a great and almost an unparalleled mental feat that any man, however resourceful, should make two successful addresses to the same congregation every week. Mr. Beecher not only did this for the period of nearly forty years, but added also a week-night lecture usually spoken of as a Lecture-room Talk, and some of the richest and most valuable practical suggestions which he has left were given at these familiar meetings.

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 224.

The attendance at these Friday-night gatherings of his people was usually very large, reaching sometimes seven or eight hundred. The exercises were lacking in the formality, stiffness, and solemnity which formerly characterized almost all American prayer-meetings. Mr. Beecher contrived to come into closer relations with his people than many pastors have been able to do, and than was possible to him from the pulpit. Although he usually did almost all the speaking, he elicited by skillful questions pertinent and valuable remarks from others, was patient even with bores, and often succeeded in shutting them off, and secured a large degree of liberty and a pervading home feeling on the part of the congregation. The American historian, James Parton, has given vivid pictures of Mr. Beecher in his lecture-room, a room high and brilliantly lighted, full of cheerful company "not one of whom seemed to have on more or richer clothes than she had the moral strength to wear." "No pulpit, or anything like a pulpit, casts a shadow over the scene; but in its stead there was rather a large platform, raised two steps, covered with dark green canvas, and having upon it a very small table and one chair." "At one side of the platform but on the floor of the room, among the settees, there was a piano open. Mr. Beecher sat near by, reading what appeared to be a letter of three or four sheets." The whole scene was so "informal, unstudied, and social" that in reporting it Mr. Parton felt as if he were "reporting for print the conversation of a private evening party." Mr. Beecher gave out a hymn by the number in a low tone of voice, the piano led the singing, which was joyous and unanimous. The pastor

in a low tone pronounced the name of one of the brethren who led in prayer; several prayers, brief and simple, alternated with the singing. "The meeting ran along in the most spontaneous and pleasant manner; and, with all his heartiness and simplicity, there was a certain refined decorum pervading all that was done and said. There was a pause after the last hymn died away, and then Mr. Beecher, still seated, began, in the tone of conversation, to speak." What Mr. Beecher said at meetings like this has largely been gathered up and published. Many of his wise words at these informal meetings are yet to be given to the world.

Christians who have been trained to value a prayer-meeting by the number and fervor of the prayers offered, were not always satisfied with the happy, easy, and conversational tone and the apparent lack of wrestling earnestness manifested in these meetings. More time was given to singing than to prayer, and this feature of his meetings he justified in these words from his "Lectures on Preaching": "In the prayer-meeting music ought to be a grand substratum. They are called prayer-meetings, but two prayers are often enough for a meeting—about two prayers to six hymns. Why? Because out of every six people that pray, there are not two that can pray as a hymn can. It is not probable that you will find one person in an average congregation of two hundred that can express so admirably, with such subtle lines, the dealing of God with men, as Cowper did. It is not once in a hundred times that a man can preach so much sound Gospel in verse as old John Newton did. You have very few men like Wesley and Watts, who are the

two wings of hymnody. These two men soar as few can soar. We might say,

“Descend, immortal dove;  
Take us upon thy wings.

When these men are invoked, they take the whole congregation on their wings and lift them up.” The more Mr. Beecher's methods are studied, the more it is seen that he was a skillful fisher of men, a careful and keen-eyed student of the motives by which human hearts are stirred, and the results achieved by him amply vindicate his general wisdom. In saying this it is not intimated that his methods were the best in their adaptation to all kinds of people.

The Friday evening meetings, as Dr. Lyman Abbott has suggested, furnished Mr. Beecher his “pastoral opportunity.” “Mr. Beecher never does any house-to-house visitation; and now he rarely conducts a funeral or calls upon those in sorrow. But he nevertheless does a considerable amount of pastoral work. At the close of his Friday-evening meeting he holds what I may call a religious reception. For sometimes half an hour after the regular service is closed, he sits on the platform to receive, hear, suggest, counsel, direct. He shakes hands with any one who offers him a hand. No name escapes him. A friend returned after a long absence is instantly recognized and greeted with the warm cordiality of a love that is without dissimulation.”<sup>1</sup>

Many persons now living will remember the scenes in the lecture-room on the Friday evenings before the Communion of the Lord's Supper was to be cele-

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<sup>1</sup> “Life of Beecher,” pp. 274-275.

brated, when Mr. Beecher with his deacons examined the candidates for admission into the Church. A theological student from the Union Seminary, New York, and his brother, who was also a student in the same seminary, presented their letters on one evening. The letters were in the usual form, but they were surprised to have Mr. Beecher go back of the letters and inquire somewhat into their personal experience and habits. He even asked them what position they took with regard to the use of intoxicating drinks. They both replied that they were total abstainers, and Mr. Beecher was glad of the answer. Mr. Dwight L. Moody, then almost unknown to fame, was a listener at the examination, and he said: "Mr. Beecher, what would you have done, had these young men given you a different reply?" Mr. Beecher said: "I should have put them off for awhile and counseled with them, hoping to bring them to right views."

He purposed making his Church a socially democratic and happy congregation, realizing if possible the ideal of a great Christian household. The social meetings which in the early years of Plymouth Church were a marked feature of its life, and at which he was accustomed to speak for ten minutes or so, in his attractive, humorous, and kindly way, doubtless helped to mold the Plymouth congregation into its remarkable unity of spirit, although after a time he deemed it wiser to let his people choose by natural affiliation their own familiar companionships. He believed that the brotherly spirit pervading a congregation was essential to those higher manifestations of spiritual interest and vitality for which he prayed and labored. Revivals sprang up and con-

tinued, sometimes for years. "Probably the most sacred season in the history of this room (the lecture-room) was the season of 1857 and 1858. I well remember the stormy, the snowy Monday morning in February when a few of us, twenty-eight in number, I think, met for a first morning prayer-meeting. Religious interest had been deepening throughout the country, it had been deepening in Plymouth Church; but to all requests to appoint a protracted meeting, Mr. Beecher had but one reply. He disavowed his belief in 'got-up' revivals, saying that if the spirit of revival was in the Church the revival itself would follow. For two weeks this morning meeting was continued, without Mr. Beecher's presence. To some he even seemed to discourage the work by refusing to participate in it, but his purpose was to put the responsibility upon his people, and he achieved his object. Reluctantly but gradually they took it, the meetings steadily increased in size and interest; and at last, at the close of a Sabbath evening inquiry meeting, he announced his purpose to be present at the next morning prayer-meeting. This was March 11th, and from that day until July 3d, those morning meetings were kept up I believe without a break, and almost without a single absence of the pastor. They who attended these meetings will never forget them; their freedom of intercourse, their social warmth, their spiritual tenderness."<sup>1</sup>

In July, 1850, he made his first voyage to England. His strong constitution had been somewhat weakened by frequent attacks of sickness. During his absence

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Beecher," pp. 273-274.

the pulpit of Plymouth Church was supplied by his brother Rev. Charles Beecher. Henry Ward landed at Liverpool on July 30, 1850, and a new and important development of his large and impressible nature was then begun. The sea had not been agreeable to this poor sailor, but Old England filled him with delight. Few Americans have ever visited the Old Home with so intense an appreciation of many aspects of English life and scenery. His note-books record in briefest fashion his observations of English hedges, of railroad mile-posts, of the peculiarities of railway construction, of the facts regarding the manufacture of plated-ware in Birmingham, and of many other things which filled his memory with materials for illustration. In his "Yale Lectures on Preaching" he said: "When I was in Birmingham, I went in to see how they manufacture *papier-maché*, and I saw the vast machinery and the various methods by which it was blocked out and made. I watched the various processes from room to room until I came to the last, where is given the finishing touch, for final polish. They told me they had tried everything in the world for polishing, and at last had been convinced that there was nothing like the human hand. There was no leather or other substance that they could get hold of, that had such power to polish to the very finest smoothness, as this living leather in its vital state—the human hand. It is very much so with people. You can teach them from the pulpit in certain large ways, but there are some things you cannot do except by putting your very hand on them and working them down."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Second Series, p. 184.

Not only was his memory stored with facts through observation, but he found in England that which fired his imagination, as for example Warwick Castle. "I was wafted backward and backward, until I stood on the foundations upon which Old England herself was builded, when as yet there was none of her. There, far back of all literature, before the English tongue itself was formed, earlier than her jurisprudence and than all modern civilization, I stood in imagination, and, reversing my vision, looked down into a far future to search for the men and deeds which had been, as if they were yet to be; thus making a prophecy of history, and changing memory into a dreamy foresight. . . . Against these stones on which I lay my hand have rung the sounds of battle. Yonder on these very grounds, there raged, in sight of men who stand where I do, fiercest and deadliest conflicts. All this ground is fed on blood."<sup>1</sup>

At Stratford-on-Avon, the birthplace and home of Shakespeare, Mr. Beecher put up at the Red Horse Inn, and while there he passed some of the transfigured moments of his life. He attended Church here, in the building where Shakespeare lies buried, and the service, in the forms which had been dear to his mother's heart, made a wonderful impression on his sensitive mind. "I had never heard any part of the supplication, a direct prayer, chanted by a choir, and it seemed as though I heard not with my ear but with my soul. I was dissolved, my whole being seemed to be like an incense wafted gratefully toward God. The Divine Presence rose before me in wondrous majesty, but of ineffable gentleness and good-

<sup>1</sup>"Star Papers," pp. 20-21.



ness, and I could not stay away from more familiar approach, but seemed irresistibly but gently drawn toward God. My soul, then thou didst magnify the Lord, and rejoice in the God of thy salvation! And then came to my mind the many exultations of the Psalms of David, and never before were the expressions and figures so noble and so necessary to express what I felt. I had risen, it seemed to me, so high as to be where David was when his soul conceived the things which he wrote. . . . O! when in the prayers, breathed forth in strains of sweet, simple, solemn music, the love of Christ was recognized, how I longed then to give utterance to what that love seemed to me. There was a moment in which the Heavens seemed open to me and I saw the glory of God! All the earth seemed to me a storehouse of images, made to set forth the Redeemer, and I could scarcely be stilled from crying out. . . . For the first time in my life I went forward to commune in the Episcopal Church. Without any intent of my own, but because from my seat it was nearest, I knelt down at the altar, with the dust of Shakespeare beneath my feet. I thought of it as I thought of ten thousand other things, without the least disturbance of devotion. It seemed as if I stood upon a place so high that, like one looking over a wide valley, all objects conspired to make but one view. I thought of the General Assembly and Church of the First Born, of my mother and brother and children in Heaven, of my living family on earth, of you, of the whole Church entrusted to my hands—they afar off, I upon the banks of the Avon."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Star Papers," pp. 30-31.

Oxford, noblest built of English towns, with its

“ Seclusions ivy-hushed, and pavements sweet  
With immemorial lisp of musing feet ”

impressed him as it does all sensitive minds. He walked with solemn reverence among the alcoves and through the halls of the Bodleian Library “as if in a pyramid of embalmed souls.” Arrived in London, he had the usual feelings which come to natures like his, workers in behalf of their fellow men, when visiting the scenes of historic renown, a sense of insufficiency for his own life’s work. “I have everywhere in my traveling—at the shrine of the martyrs in Oxford, at the graves of Bunyan and Wesley in London, at the vault in which Raleigh was for twelve years confined in the Tower—asked myself whether I could have done and endured what they did, and *as* they did! It is enough to make one tremble for himself to have such a heart-sounding as this gives him. I cast the lead for the depth of my soul, but I have little reason for pride.”<sup>1</sup>

He found relief from these moods of discouragement in Art and in Nature. In August he went over to Paris and noted the life of the common people, and the immense and startling impressions made upon his own mind by the prodigious wealth and beauty of the art galleries. “I knew that I had gradually grown fond of pictures from my boyhood. I had felt the power of some few. But nothing had ever come up to a certain ideal that hovered in my mind, and I supposed I was not fine enough to appre-

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<sup>1</sup>“ Biography,” pp. 345-346.

ciate with any discrimination the works of masters. To find myself absolutely intoxicated ; to find my system so much affected that I could not control my nerves ; to find myself trembling and laughing, and weeping, and almost hysterical, and that in spite of my shame and determination to behave better—such a power of these galleries over me I had not expected. I have lived for two days in fairyland, wakened out of it by some few sights which I have mechanically visited, more for the sake of pleasing friends at home, when I return, than for a present pleasure for myself, but relapsing again into the golden vision.”<sup>1</sup>

He described a state of trance, of happy exaltation when he almost seemed to himself to float out of his body, that came to him while gazing at these masterpieces. “The subjects of many of the works—suffering, heroic resistance, angels, Arcadian scenes, especially the scenes of Christ’s life and death—seemed not unfitting accompaniment to my mind and suggested to me, in a glorious vision, the drawing near of the redeemed souls to the precincts of Heaven! O! with what an outburst of soul did I implore Christ to wash me, and all whom I loved, in His precious blood, that we might not fail of entering the glorious city whose builder and maker is God! All my sins seemed not only *sins* but great deformities. They seemed not merely affronts against God but insults to my own nature! My soul snuffed at them and trod them down as the mire in the street. Then, holy and loving thoughts toward God or toward man seemed to me to be as beautiful as those fleecy islets

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<sup>1</sup> “Star Papers,” p. 57.

along the West at sunset, crowned with glory; and the gentler aspirations for goodness and nobleness and knowledge seemed to me like silver mists through which the morning is striking, wafting them gently and in wreaths and films heavenward. Great deeds, heroism for worthy objects, for God, or for one's fellows, or for one's own purity, seem not only natural but as things without which a soul could not live."<sup>1</sup>

Such emotions were fatiguing and some would say almost morbid, but they are a key to the magnificent possibilities of eloquence on religious themes which he afterwards and often illustrated, and perhaps they are also a key to the almost reckless heroism of self-sacrifice which, disregarding the voice of selfish prudence, brought him into some of his most terrible sorrows. It is interesting to remember one habit of his, maintained in Paris, which is quite in contrast with the custom of many of his fellow countrymen who travel abroad. Writing to his daughter in 1859 he says: "When I was in Paris I acted just as I do in Brooklyn. I took no more liberties, and was quite as observant of my home proprieties. And I must say that I do not relish the idea of our young countrymen going to Europe to learn how to get rid of religious habits. Foreign travel should improve our manners, increase our information, enlarge our experience of men, enrich our imagination, cultivate our tastes, but *not* enervate our conscience."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Star Papers," p. 61.   <sup>2</sup>"Biography," p. 384.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### REVIVALS. NATURE. MUSIC.

HE returned to America restored in health, and shortly after his arrival home he wrote for the New York *Independent* a letter denouncing what he deemed the bigotry and intolerance practised upon the Cunard steamer. "No one was allowed to read the service there except the captain, who, having been playing cards late Saturday night, and being addicted to the sailor habit of profanity, was not considered fit for the office."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher was a born fighter for what he deemed truth and liberty. His articles in the New York *Independent* from this time began to attract wide attention, and in truth many of these Star papers are as brimful of genius, witty observations on a great variety of themes, and of helpful suggestions as anything which he ever wrote. He defended the Jenny Lind managers for the high price of tickets demanded for her famous concerts, and said: "Jenny Lind, if we understand her desires and aims, is employing a resplendent musical genius in the most noble accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. In

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 350.

her we behold a spectacle of eminent genius employing its magic power in the elevation of the human race. If men would spare from the disgusting weed and poisonous liquors one-half of what they spend every month, there are few so poor as not to be able to hear Jenny Lind."<sup>1</sup>

He gave a cordial welcome to Kossuth, and for weeks entertained in his own house Kossuth's chief of staff with his wife. In 1852 his family was enlarged by the birth of twin sons.

The Church entered upon its work that year without debt, and Mr. Beecher made an earnest effort to secure a spiritual prosperity equally ample with that temporal prosperity that his Church enjoyed. This earnest effort was eminently successful. The great revival in Plymouth Church occurred in 1858, but others preceded it, and the methods by which he labored for these periods of moral quickening appear to have been definitely fixed in his mind from the beginning of his great pastorate.

No part of his "Yale Lectures on Preaching" is more vivid and vital with his deepest convictions than the chapters on the Philosophy of Revivals, Revivals Subject to Law, and the Conduct of Revivals. The great popular uprising of the Jews in the rebuilding of their temple, the three great annual visits of the whole Jewish male population to Jerusalem, he held were nothing more than protracted meetings. He regarded Christ's Galilean life and ministry as only a state of religious revival. He believed that revivals have a large place in the modern Church. "These

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 351.

great divine freshets " he likened to the rains upon the mountains, " which filled the immediate channels fuller than they can hold," overflow their banks, and spread fertility on every side.

He believed that the acquiescent, the frigid, the torpid condition of the human faculties needed to be stirred and fired that they might have their best development. The regular institutions of the Church are inadequate to produce these results in whole communities. " The Church has not been broad enough to spread over the whole population and brood it." Since so large a proportion are outside of the Churches, he believed that these revival efforts were indispensably necessary if the Gospel is to be preached to all men. The Churches themselves need reviving to counteract the formalism begotten by regularity and organization. Life is better than death, religious excitation is wholesome and not perilous. Men are not afraid of excitement in politics or in commerce; it is the sign of vigorous life. We are not in danger of too much or too continuous excitement in spiritual directions.

" Do not the sounds of life drown the thunders of eternity in men's ears? Are there not ten thousand boiling cauldrons of passion and feeling underneath them? Is not every great interest of society pulling upon them—the household, the store, the shop, the office, all processes of business and of civil society? Are not men wrecked with the thousand worldly things that are tending to undermine faith, to blind spiritual vision? And is it not a great grace and mercy when, even if it comes with imperfection—and what man is without it?—there is an excitement that

lifts men out of the slough, lifts them out of all their entanglements?"<sup>1</sup>

There are deceptions and spurious conversions under every economy and method. "Men that attempt to come into the Kingdom of God head first are just as liable to go wrong as those that go heart first: I think that they are more liable to go wrong. The regular Church is to a revival what greenhouses are to the summer. Greenhouses do very well; they make heat; they have their own stove and stoker; all they want is brought into their little space, and when, by and by, the robins and bluebirds come, and the elms begin to bud and the maples show their tassels, and people say that summer is abroad in the land, the old gardener walks out, and says, 'Look here, I don't like this summer! There are no toads in my house, but there will be toads abroad now soon. Snakes don't get in here, this is safe, but there will be snakes in the woods if summer comes. It won't do for us to have this thing all over the land.' Summer, if it *does* bring mosquitoes, is more desirable than are greenhouses, for vegetation, for fruit, or for anything else."

High feeling results in clear seeing. Revivals raise the tone of Church piety. Mr. Beecher believed that the Divine Spirit was not capricious, and that revivals are under the law of cause and effect. Their conformableness to law "is the foundation of education and knowledge in the production of emotion, or in the production and conduct of all spiritual processes." "To get up a reformation in the matter of

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<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., p. 226.



gambling or drinking is looked upon as normal and right; but to stir men up in behalf of the whole extent of their moral character and life, is not that normal also? Is there anything ridiculous in that?"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher acted on the theory that it is wise and best to bring to bear on the religious sensibilities whatever influences are wholesome. He believed that beauty may be made of constant service to religion. He believed in liturgies, especially the Congregational Liturgy, improved as he strove to improve it in Plymouth Church. He thought the ordinary services of non-liturgical Churches were usually barren from the want of common sympathy. He believed it to be the office of the minister to develop the gifts of all the members of the Church, to inspire and drill them so that the common worship would show an abundance of wholesome feeling, because those who joined in it abounded in spiritual vitality.

"A dead Church with a liturgy on top is like a sand desert covered with artificial bouquets. It's bright for the moment. But it is fictitious and fruitless. There are no roots to the flowers. There is no soil for the roots. The utmost that a liturgy can do upon the chilly bosom of an undeveloped, untrained Church is to cover its nakedness with a faint shadow of what they fain would have, but cannot get."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Beecher had so warm a feeling toward the Episcopal Church, of which his mother was a member,

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<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> "New Star Papers," p. 259.

that what he has written about liturgies must never be taken as the slightest reflection upon Episcopalian forms.

As multitudes remember, it was early the custom of Plymouth Church to introduce floral decorations as "the signs of gladness," "offerings of joyful hearts to God," in the services of the sanctuary. This was in accord with some of Mr. Beecher's deepest thoughts with regard to the uses of the things that God has made. He believed that mission Churches and all others might well be decorated with a few flowers to light up their dreariness, or to suggest, even in the midst of man's most beautiful handiwork, the nobler beauty of God's workmanship. In this, as in so many other things, Plymouth Church was a pioneer. How much of America's intellectual and religious emancipation and enlightenment is due to the brave, broad-minded servant of God, unfettered by conventionalism, who was determined to have the life of the Church to which he ministered, conformed to his best thought and highest aspirations!

Mr. Beecher gained a world-wide celebrity as a political and social reformer; he was marvelously sensitive to what he deemed injustice. But he was also a great teacher in the realm of the beautiful. He believed that he owed to Ruskin more than to any other modern teacher "for the blessings of sight." "Thousands of golden hours and materials, both for self-enjoyment and the instruction of others, enough to fill up our whole life, we owe to the spirit excited in us by the reading of Ruskin's early works. The sky, the earth, and the waters are no longer what they were to us. We have learned a language and

come to a sympathy in them more through the instrumentality of Ruskin's works than by all other instrumentalities on earth, excepting, always, the nature which my mother gave me—sainted be her name.”<sup>1</sup>

The summers of 1852 and 1853 he spent in Salisbury, Conn., listening to the birds and crickets, the grasshoppers and the cattle. Lying on the grass of a tufted knoll, gazing up into the sky, he dreamed and yearned with feelings and thoughts commingled, while tears came unbidden. His twin boys had died, and been buried in one grave, and from this time on Mr. Beecher's heart may be said to have been a fountain of sympathy.

The next summer he spent in Lenox, Mass., where he purchased a farm, and knew the pleasures and solemnities of ownership in the soil. He has recorded his feelings in the presence of an elm-tree standing in his pasture. It seemed to him that there was almost a sacrilege “in the very thought of *property* in such a creature of God as this cathedral-topped tree! Does a man bare his head in some old church? So did I, standing in the shadow of this regal tree, and looking up into that completed glory at which three hundred years had been at work with noiseless fingers! What was I in its presence but a grasshopper? My heart said: ‘I may not call thee property, and that property mine! Thou belongest to the air. Thou art the child of summer. Thou art the mighty temple where birds praise God. Thou belongest to no man's hand, but to all men's eyes that do love

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<sup>1</sup> “Biography,” p. 394.

beauty, and that have learned through beauty to behold God!"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher had very liberal ideas in regard to the highest uses of a farm. "The chief use of a farm, if it be well selected and of a proper soil, is to lie down upon. Mine is an excellent farm for such uses, and I thus cultivate it every day. Large crops are the consequence, of great delight and fancies more than the brain can hold. My industry is exemplary. Though but a week here, I have lain down more hours, and in more places, than that hard-working brother of mine in the whole year that he has dwelt here. Strange that industrious lying down should come so natural to me, and standing up and lazing about after the plow or behind the scythe so natural to him!"<sup>2</sup>

Thus working and resting the years went by. In 1855, the hymn book, known as "The Plymouth Collection," the pioneer of a large class of similar books, was published by him.

Some years before this he had published a small book called "Temple Melodies," the music of which was selected by Mr. Jones, the conductor of the music in Plymouth Church, and by himself. Though Mr. Beecher was the father of this little hymn book, the publishers, the Mason Brothers, of New York, omitted from it any mention of him, being unwilling that the name of an "accursed Abolitionist" should appear in it.

"The Plymouth Collection," like all of Mr. Beecher's intellectual children, was violently attacked. In his

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<sup>1</sup> "Star Papers," p. 280.   <sup>2</sup> "Star Papers," p. 268.

defense, written as a Star paper for *The Independent*, he convicted his critics of great ignorance and amazed some of his friends by his own wide knowledge. In this article occur some of the most brilliant and characteristically eloquent sentences that ever came from his pen.

“Hymns are the exponents of the inmost piety of the Church. They are crystalline tears, or blossoms of joy, or holy prayers, or incarnated raptures. They are the jewels which the Church has worn; the pearls, the diamonds, and precious stones formed into amulets more potent against sorrow and sadness than the most famous charms of wizard or magician. And he who knows the way hymns flowed, knows where the blood of piety ran, and can trace its veins and arteries to the very heart.”

“There are Crusaders’ Hymns, that rolled forth their truths upon the Oriental air, while a thousand horses’ hoofs kept time below and ten thousand palm-leaves whispered and kept time above! Other hymns, fulfilling the promise of God, that His saints should mount up with wings as eagles, have borne up the sorrows, the desires, and the aspirations of the poor, the oppressed and the persecuted, of Huguenots, of Covenanters, and of Puritans, and winged them to the bosom of God.”

“One hymn hath opened the morning in ten thousand families, and dear children with sweet voices have charmed the evening in a thousand places with the utterance of another. Nor do I know of any steps now left on earth by which one may so soon rise above trouble or weariness as the verses of a hymn and the notes of a tune. And if the angels that Jacob saw

sang when they appeared, then I know that the ladder which he beheld was but the scale of divine music let down from heaven to earth."

He was right in thinking his book destined to inaugurate a new era in Church music. He himself said of it: "It was made on a theory of my own, or rather it was the result of my observation and experience. I had observed what hymns appealed to the imagination and affection of the people; and I did not believe that any hymn book would ever be popular which had not in it hymns, the elements of which appealed to these faculties. I had observed, also, what tunes the people loved. I had observed that any music, however irregular or grotesque, that appealed to their imagination and affection, they would adopt and make their own." He believed that music was one of the most important aids to the highest offices of the preacher, and regarded it as an agent, "in affecting not so much the understanding as that part of a man's nature which the sermon leaves comparatively barren."

He looked upon music as the preacher's prime-minister, "inciting to emotion through the imagination, through the taste, through the feeling." He spoke very intelligently and discriminatingly in his "Lectures on Preaching" of the relations of music to worship, and paid his loving tribute to John Zundel, who for many years was the organist of Plymouth Church, of whom he said: "To him music means worship and the organ means religion." He said of Zundel's handling of the organ: "It has brought tears to my eyes a hundred times; I have gone in jaded and unhearted, and have been caught up by him and

lifted so that I saw the flash of the gates! I have been comforted, I have been helped."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps no one has ever spoken more sensibly about the qualities of different organists or ridiculed more effectively the "vast number of persons who play without reason, without heart, without soul, and with no sort of religious foundation." The work of the organ, like preaching itself, is only a means to an end. Not many are inspired with the conception that they are the servants of God whose office it is to inspire the nobler sentiments of men, and who that heard it will ever forget his description of "the musical monkeys, dancing on their organ, playing up and down, rattling all sorts of waltzes, with a long leg stretched out here and there to make it sound like Sunday music?"<sup>2</sup>

He believed that the minister should know enough to be the bishop of the organ and organist, as well as of the congregation. The congregational singing of Plymouth Church, under Mr. Beecher's leadership, ultimately became a fine art, but this great achievement was the result of persistent urging and inspiration on his part.

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<sup>1</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> "Yale Lectures on Preaching," Vol. II., p. 125.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CAUSES OF POPULARITY AND UNPOPULARITY.

MR. BEECHER'S phenomenal genius and novel methods gained him a wide popularity. Probably no American of our century, neither Mr. Blaine nor Phillips Brooks, has surpassed him in magnetic power, the faculty of drawing and holding men, "the art Napoleon" of moving and blending many minds into one. But it should be noted at this point that his unpopularity was even wider than his popularity. He had mingled politics with religion, he had championed the Abolition cause, he was believed to be an innovator in theology. Dull minds could not understand him. Those wedded to conventional methods did not like him nor trust him. He was widely misunderstood. Multitudes failed to catch the true meaning of his speech because it did not come to them in familiar forms. He introduced a new phraseology into his discussion of the doctrines, he discarded all hackneyed phrases, and probably he was the most misreported man of his generation.

There are thousands living to-day who have in their minds a strong prejudice against Mr. Beecher, whose chief knowledge of him has come from grotesque passages culled from his sermons by newspaper men anxious to make a readable, and especially a sensational half column, in the next morning's jour-



nal. Multitudes of his friends were year after year shocked by these garbled sentences and sensational passages, removed out of all connection with the serious and earnest thoughts of his discourses. For many years "what Beecher said" was caught up by a hundred journals, and scattered broadcast over the continent. And as most people, unfortunately, confine their reading to the daily press, very many have lived and died with an utterly erroneous impression of the spirit of Mr. Beecher's ministry.

In 1884 Mr. Beecher freed his mind about this thing before the New York and Brooklyn Association of Ministers and Churches. He did not decry the usefulness of reporters, but ventured to suggest that they were not omniscient in theology and philosophy, and were not usually skillful in putting the sense of a discourse into a reading space of five minutes. "For more than twenty-five years there is not a man on the globe who has been reported so much as I have been in my private meetings, in my street conversation, on the platform at public meetings, and steadily in the pulpit; a great many times admirably, and sometimes abominably. This has been going on week after week and year after year. Do you suppose I could follow up all misstatements and rectify them? . . . A man might run around like a kitten after its tail, all his life, if he were going around explaining all reports of his expressions and all the things he had written. Let them go. They will correct themselves. The average and general influence of a man's teaching will be more mighty than any single misconception, or misapprehension through misconception."

There is large truth in this, and yet Mr. Beecher suffered through his whole life, and his just fame has widely suffered since his death, from a misunderstanding of what he said and did, through inadequate and misleading reports. A friend of Mr. Beecher writes of an experience which occurred at the Plankinton House, Milwaukee. "In the afternoon a reporter called and wished to interview Mr. Beecher upon any subject he was willing to discuss. Mr. Beecher said that he had just had his dinner, and he wished the reporter would excuse him, that he might have his afternoon nap, and added : ' Here is Blank ; you talk with him, and ask all the questions you want to ; he will tell you all about myself that I could tell you.' So the reporter asked me several questions concerning Mr. Beecher's trip, lectures, plans, etc., and when he was through I asked him how he liked this sort of business, going about interviewing people and asking them questions. He said he didn't like it very well, but that he did not do it all the year ; he reported for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in the winter, and in the summer he went with the circus. I was talking with Mr. Beecher about it in the evening, and it was mentioned that this was one of the sort of men who, knowing nothing about theology or theological points, reported his theological discussions and sermons for the daily press, and upon whose reports he was judged by his fellow clergymen."

It was one of the trials and misfortunes of a man of much interest to so many people, that he suffered so greatly in an age of enterprising, audacious, careless, and sometimes reckless and unscrupulous journalism. His own lack of verbal memory, though

doubtless a help to his extemporaneous abundance of original speech, was a loss, in some instances, to accuracy in his public utterances, and his gravest addresses abounded with so much of wit, grotesque humor, and stinging denunciation, that it was very easy to compile from his addresses what did not give a fair impression of the general tenor of his speech.

A chief occasion for Mr. Beecher's unpopularity with the fastidious was the frequent and usually needless shock which he gave "to their conventional nerves." He was a defender of naturalness, fitness, good taste, and propriety in the pulpit, and he usually practiced the virtues which he inculcated. But there are those to whom naturalness in the pulpit is offensive. Beecher's nature, for example, had so much of spontaneousness, impulsive enthusiasm, overflowing wit and humor, that he seemed a great departure from those conventionalities of the pulpit which are usually pleasing to the average man.

Mr. N. D. Pratt, in his reminiscences of Mr. Beecher and Plymouth Church, writes:

"The services were cheerful, earnest, interesting, and frequently entertaining; he did not hesitate to make the people laugh if he chose; frequently they broke forth in applause. In speaking once of the use of humor to influence men, he said: 'Every bell in my belfry shall ring to help influence men.'

"One Thanksgiving Day he had preached one of his strong, patriotic sermons, and just as he had finished reading the hymn, at the close of the service, and sat down, a large man with a stentorian voice, in the gallery, rose and said: 'Mr. Beecher, if your Thanksgiving dinner is as good as your sermon has been, I

would like to be invited home to dine with you.' On another occasion he announced, on Sunday morning, that Anna Dickinson would speak at his Church on the following Tuesday evening; he said: 'The Academy of Music that is used for theatres and operas, and for every sort of entertainment for which a hall can be used, has been denied this woman, and so I have offered her Plymouth Church, where she may speak upon the subject of liberty.' Some one in the congregation sang out: 'Mr. Beecher, you are mistaken; the Academy of Music was not denied Miss Dickinson.' Mr. Beecher said quietly: 'I am informed by one who should know, that I am mistaken, and that the Academy of Music was not denied Miss Dickinson.' Immediately a person rose and said: 'Mr. Beecher, you are right; the Academy of Music was denied Miss Dickinson.' Mr. Beecher quietly remarked: 'I am informed by one who should know, that I am right, and that the Academy of Music was denied Miss Dickinson; well, brethren, let us merge all our little troubles in singing the four hundred and fiftieth hymn.'

"I recall a statement that was frequently made with reference to Mr. Beecher's entering the pulpit one warm summer morning, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, exclaiming: 'It's a d—d hot day,' stood for a moment, and then proceeded to say that, as he was coming to Church that morning, he overheard a young man make that remark, and so he would take occasion to preach a sermon upon the subject of profanity. This story was told in every newspaper in the country. Every few years it would be brought up and would make its rounds through

the papers, and thousands of people believed that it was an actual occurrence. Mr. Beecher contradicted it over his own signature in the New York *Independent*, stating that it was the last time he would ever make a contradiction of such an absurd story."

Then Mr. Beecher's liberal ideas in regard to other Churches were not grateful to many of his own denomination and he put so much more emphasis upon the truth of Christianity than on sectarian tenets and practices, that sectarians could never count on him as one of their sort. He had to be contented through life to be deemed unorthodox by multitudes whom he loved and who did not feel so strongly as he did that the great orthodoxy was being like Christ and doing His will.

These years which we have considered were years of growth in a great variety of directions. It is not usually known that, though Mr. Beecher was pre-eminently a student of Nature and of human nature, he was always a great reader. Those who know his public speeches will not be surprised to learn that he made a careful study of the constitutional history of America, and those who are familiar with his sermons will gain some idea of the variety of things he knew. Mr. John R. Howard writes of him: "He made it a point to follow up in literature as well as in practical research every topic that greatly interested him. Sometimes it was the general history of art, or the special development of architecture, of painting, of sculpture, of engraving, of etching; and his library showed illustrations of all those splendid lines of thought and achievement; and it was not upon his book-shelves and walls alone, but in himself that

could be found unusual stores of knowledge. Music and organ-building; soap and cosmetics; pottery and porcelains; large additions to his already extensive knowledge of flowers, trees, and methods of cultivation; general literature, history, theology, metaphysics, natural science, and especially the whole line of philosophic literature which tends towards the coördination of these great departments: physiology, anatomy, and medicine, and, in short, a large array of books upon topics of interest to all humanity, and, therefore, not foreign to him, bore witness to the incessant labor with which he stored his growing mind."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BATTLE FOR FREEDOM.

THE slavery question was the most tremendous and vital of all the political and moral problems which the American people ever had to solve. Now that the solution has come, men are in peril of forgetting its significance and the enormous cost of its settlement. Mr. Beecher was drawn into political controversy and agitation because the controversies of his time involved all the principles of humanity and of religion.

Joseph Cook has well said: "His was not a sickly philanthropy, based upon merely political considerations. It was a religious philanthropy. His tireless lectures on reform were secular sermons. This was the glory of his anti-slavery career, that it sprang from religious motives. This was what made him so excoriate all crimes against the dignity of the human spirit, whether on the part of the capitalist, or of the slave-driver, or of the politicians in a corrupt party. All was to be brought into harmony with Christ's kingdom; and his watchword was really that of our best reformers to-day, that Christ is King, and that on His shoulder is laid the government of the world."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Current Religious Perils," p. 142.

It was inevitable that Mr. Beecher should become a leader in the agitation which, at last, emboldened Lincoln, in the crisis of the war, to write freedom on the national flag. As Mr. Lowell wrote in the midst of those agitations: "It is not partisanship, it is not fanaticism, that has forced this matter of anti-slavery upon the American people; it is the spirit of Christianity, which appeals from prejudices and predilections to the moral consciousness of the individual man; that spirit elastic as air, penetrative as heat, invulnerable as sunshine, against which creed after creed and institution after institution have measured their strength and been confounded."<sup>1</sup>

It was the Spirit of Jesus Christ which created and directed the anti-slavery movement in America. That Spirit recognized the absolute humanity of the negro slave, and taught the great apostles of freedom that a soul created in the image of God and bought by the blood-drops of Calvary, cannot rightly be treated as merchandise. The cause in which Mr. Beecher with his whole soul was enlisted, was a Christian cause undertaken by Christian men, most of them orthodox Christian men, as Garrison himself was at the start. The first appeal of the first anti-slavery society was written by Moses Thatcher, afterwards a Presbyterian minister. The American Anti-Slavery Society had for its first presiding officer the Rev. Beriah Green. Its "Declaration of Sentiments" planted itself on "the Declaration of Independence and the truths of the divine revelation, as upon everlasting rock." William Jay, who wrote

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<sup>1</sup> "Lowell's Prose Works," Vol. 5. p. 15.



powerfully for emancipation, was a devoted Episcopalian, and the chief men who fought this greatest of moral battles from the hour when Garrison in an "obscure hole" in Boston sent out the first *Liberator* to the hour when Lincoln wrote his proclamation, were, with few exceptions, men who bound the Bible to their hearts as the Word of God and the word of humanity.

But the Church of America was greatly divided. While the moral agitation which attacked slavery was of Christian origin, the Churches, as organized bodies, were largely favorable to a compromise with the slave-power. "The great publishing societies that were sustained by the contributions of the Churches" were, as Mr. Beecher said, "absolutely dumb. Great controversies raged around about the doors of the Bible Society, of the Tract Society, and of the American Board for Foreign Missions. The managers of these societies resorted to every shift except that of sending the Gospel to the slaves. They would not send the Bible to the South; for, they said, 'it is a punishable offense in most of the Southern States to teach a slave to read; and are we to go in the face of this State legislation and send the Bible South?' The Tract Society said: 'We are set up to preach the Gospel, not to meddle with political and industrial institutions.' And so they went on printing tracts against tobacco and its abuses, tracts against dancing and its abuses, and refusing to print a tract that had a shadow of criticism on slavery!"

"What claim," asked Lowell, "has slavery to immunity from discussion? We are told that discussion is dangerous. Dangerous to what? Truth

invites it, courts the point of Ithuriel's spear—whose touch can but reveal more clearly the grace and grandeur of her angelic proportions. The advocates of slavery have taken refuge in the last covert of desperate sophism, and affirm that their institution is of divine ordination, that its bases are laid in the nature of man. Is anything, then, of God's contriving endangered by inquiry? Was it the system of the universe, or the monks, that trembled at the telescope of Galileo? Did the circulation of the firmament stop in terror because Newton laid his daring finger on its pulse?"<sup>1</sup>

The unpopularity of the anti-slavery cause was in truth one chief argument for Mr. Beecher's whole-souled enlistment in it. "Jesus knows," he said, "that for His sake I smote with the sword and with the spear, not because I loved controversy, but because I loved truth and humanity; and because I saw weak men flinch, and because I saw base men truckle and bargain, and because I saw the cause of Christ was likely to suffer, and I will fight to the end."<sup>2</sup>

The champion reform fighter was not naturally a belligerent man, but it was inevitable that he should rush in where the conflict was hottest. Recalling the state of things at the beginning of his Brooklyn ministry he said: "When I came here you could get no great missionary society, Bible society, or tract society to say one solitary word for the slave. Such were the interests of the mercantile classes of the South that it was extremely difficult to exert there

<sup>1</sup>"Lowell's Prose Works," Vol. V., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>"A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," p. 39

any anti-slavery influence. . . . Those who did not live then can have no conception of what it was to form a Church that should stand right out in the intense light of the time, and declare for universal liberty and for the right of the slave to the Bible, and to full religious freedom. This Church grew up right against a flinty way of bitterness and opposition."<sup>1</sup>

One of the chief eras of the anti-slavery agitation opened in 1850, at about the time that the Plymouth congregation entered their new house of worship. Mr. Beecher's anti-slavery career belongs to the second stage of the great fight, when moral agitation became blended with political action. From 1850 to his death he was a great public force in American life, easily outranking all other preachers of the Gospel and eclipsing all but a very few of our statesmen.

As a reformer he thundered louder and with more reverberations than any other agitator, unless we make the single exception of Wendell Phillips. Beecher kept closer to the average feelings and convictions of the people than did Phillips. The Boston Abolitionist was a strenuous idealist, a leader of leaders. He was like Milton, of whom Coleridge said that he was so far ahead of his age that he seemed small, though, like Milton, he looms larger and larger with the passing years. Wendell Phillips's quenchless zeal was the outcome of his passion for righteousness; Beecher's flaming enthusiasm sprang from his glowing love to humanity. His deep sympathies with his fellow men were outraged by slavery, and his right to speak from the pulpit on this theme was

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 221.

to him a sun that made bright his path to the advocacy of all other moral reforms. He is the chief champion in the New World of the pulpit's duty to apply Christianity to all the great ethical concerns of business and society. He said: "The moment a man so conducts his profession that it touches the question of right and wrong, he comes into my sphere. There I stand; and I put God's measure, the golden reed of the sanctuary, on him and his course; and I am his master, if I be a true seer and a true moral teacher."

No other volume of addresses is better worth the careful study of the young men of our times than Mr. Beecher's speeches on Freedom, Slavery, and the Civil War. They have not the vast learning of Sumner's elaborate orations, nor all of the brilliancy and pungency of Wendell Phillips's speeches, but they are not wanting in the highest qualities of timeliness, eloquence, and wisdom. Their light is equal to their heat, and their heat at times is like the central fires of the sun.

Beecher justly holds a place in the front rank of anti-slavery reformers. The men and women, who contributed to the moral education of the Nation in that long struggle, did not all walk in the same path. In different ways and far different degrees they contributed to the beneficent result. There was Benjamin Lundy, the Quaker printer, the pioneer even of Garrison; there was George Thompson, the English orator, whom America mobbed, and after thirty years, showered with national honors.

There was William Lloyd Garrison, the master who inspired many that chose different methods from

his. There were Edmund Quincy, the Boston patriot, and James G. Birney, the Kentucky slaveholder, who freed his slaves for conscience's sake. There were preachers of all shades of opinion, the illustrious Channing; Parker, the Jupiter of liberalism; the saintly Samuel J. May; his cousin, Samuel May; Lucretia Mott, who approached so nearly the perfection of human character, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, preacher, soldier, and scholar, of whom Lowell said: "He comes down from his pulpit to draw on his jack-boots and thenceforth rides, in our imagination, alongside of John Bunyan and Bishop Compton."

There was Amos A. Phelps, who gave perhaps the best definition of slavery as the "holding of a human being as property"; there was George B. Cheever, a grand Puritan of the seventeenth century, floated down into the nineteenth; there was Albert Barnes who said: "There is no power out of the Church that could sustain slavery an hour if it were not sustained in it;" there was Charles B. Storrs, of an illustrious family, who died early in the struggle; there was Leonard Bacon, of New Haven, the lion-hearted debater, from reading one of whose sermons Abraham Lincoln declared that he derived his deeper anti-slavery convictions; and there was the greatest of modern evangelists, President Charles G. Finney. Then there were poets, like Whittier, the man of peace, to whom a friendly poet sang:

"Yet for thy brother's sake,  
That lay in bonds, thou blewst a blast as bold  
As that wherewith the heart of Roland break,  
Far heard across the New World and the Old."

There was James Russell Lowell, who early became an Abolitionist, and who, both in splendid prose and trenchant verse, rendered bravest service to the slave. There was John Pierpont, an early champion of reform; there was William Cullen Bryant, who, later on in the conflict, proved that he who had uttered "the voices of the hills," and in whose song the "torrents had flashed and thundered," could sing of "Freedom's birthright," and breathe courage into the ranks of soldiers on the battlefields. There was Ralph Waldo Emerson, "that earthquake scholar of Concord," as Wendell Phillips called him, "whose serene word, like a whisper among the avalanches, topples down superstitions and prejudices."

There were lecturers like Theodore G. Weld, Lucy Stone, Henry B. Stanton, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, and Mrs. Abbie Kelly Foster, who, in her later years, like some other of the early Abolitionists, became cranky, and even mentally unsound. In the anti-slavery crusade were merchants and men of wealth like Francis Jackson, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, Henry C. Bowen, Isaac T. Hopper and Gerritt Smith. There were writers like Joshua Leavitt and Joseph P. Thompson, of *The Independent*, Oliver Johnson, William Jay, Palfrey, the historian of New England, Elizur Wright, Greeley, Lydia Maria Child, and above all the author of that epoch-making volume, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." There were political anti-slavery leaders, like John Quincy Adams, Lincoln, Sumner, Chase, Owen Lovejoy, Seward, Hale, Thaddeus Stevens, Joshua R. Giddings, George William Curtis. John A. Andrew,

and Henry Wilson ; these and many beside, some of whom are, as John Bright said of the early Abolitionists,

“On fame’s eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed.”

Amid this mixed and illustrious company, Henry Ward Beecher stands in a place of peculiar and conspicuous power. He did not belong to the Abolition party, but was in touch with them. He was not a debater and law-maker in the national Senate or House of Representatives, but quite as much as any other man he molded the popular sentiment which shapes legislation.

In reading his written and spoken words we often feel that we are in the same moral atmosphere that surrounded Garrison and Phillips. But soon there comes a sun-burst of genial humor and Christian charity which contrasts his temper with that of those law-inspired apostles of righteousness. Sometimes, even in the earlier addresses, we find appeals to Christian patriotism loftier in spirit than Webster’s most eloquent pleas for the Union. Unlike the leading Abolitionists, he believed with Lincoln and Sumner, with Chase and Seward, that the Constitution, if rightly and properly administered, would circumscribe the domain of slavery, stamp it as sectional and temporary, and doom it to certain death. The Garrisonian Abolitionists may claim, however, what the end showed to be true, that the Constitution needed to be purged and amended before it could rightly be deemed a thoroughly anti-slavery document.

Cherishing the ballot-box as both the citadel and

weapon of liberty, Beecher labored, not only to make public sentiment, but to crystallize it into political action. Moreover, working within the Church, while he sympathized in part with Garrison and Phillips in their unsparing denunciations of organized Christianity, still he believed that there was enough religion in the world, "in the Church and out of it," to destroy slavery, a spirit "which, in God's own time, in spite of recreant clergymen, apostate statesmen, venal politicians, and trafficking shopmen, shall fall upon this vast and unmitigated abomination and utterly crush it. But my earnest desire," he said, "is that slavery shall be destroyed by the manifest power of Christianity. If it were given to me to choose whether it should be destroyed in fifty years by selfish commercial influences, or, standing for seventy-five years, be then the spirit and trophy of Christ, I had rather let it linger twenty-five years more, that God may be honored, and not Mammon, in the destruction of it. So do I hate it that I should rejoice in its extinction, even did the devil tread it out as he first kindled it; but how much rather would I see God Almighty come down to shake the earth with His tread, to tread all tyrannies and oppressions small as the dust of the highway, and to take unto Himself the glory."

These words taken from a letter to the *New York Tribune*, indicate the utterly Christian spirit which, as it seemed to him, should be carried into this struggle. In another letter to the same paper he said: "I would work for the slave for his own sake, but I am sure that I would work ten times as earnestly for the slave for Christ's sake." He was the last man to pluck a single leaf from the brows of Garrison and Phillips,



but it was impossible for him to adopt all their methods, though he applauded the righteousness of their cause. "There was odium and influence enough arrayed against the anti-slavery movement, under the form of early Abolitionism to have sunk ten enterprises which depended upon men for existence. But there was a spirit in this cause, there was a secret strength, which nerved it, and it lived right on, and grew, and trampled down opposition, and came forth victorious! There was an irresistibility in it which made it superior to the faults of its friends and the deadly hatred of its enemies."<sup>1</sup>

No vivid picture of his career is possible except when drawn on the background of the moral darkness which had shrouded the land. Slavery had early been fastened on the American coast. In the century before 1776, three million two hundred and fifty thousand negroes had been taken by Great Britain alone from the shores of Africa for the various colonies of the New World. A quarter of a million of these, according to Bancroft, perished in the horrors of the Atlantic voyage. Against the protest of many, slavery was introduced into the forming national life of America. "It's against the Gospel," said Governor Oglethorpe of Georgia. "The selling of souls is a dangerous merchandise," said John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians of Massachusetts.

In the eighteenth century John Wesley and John Woolman, Hopkins, and the younger Edwards had written against the slave system. Abolition societies, chiefly of Christian men, were organized with such

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography,"

officers as Franklin, Hamilton, and Jay. Jefferson had trembled for his country, remembering "that God is just," and that in a conflict between freedom and slavery, "God has no attribute which could take part with slaveholders." Climate, conscience, and the Gospel had combined to rid the Northern States of the remnants of slavery. Abolition sentiment was not dead at the South. As late as 1818, the General Assembly of the unbroken Presbyterian Church declared slavery "utterly inconsistent with the law of God," "and totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of Jesus Christ."

But three fatal compromises had gone into the Constitution of 1787. The slaveholder, while retaining the negro as a chattel, was allowed to count him as three-fifths of a man and voter, thus gaining an important advantage in national legislation. The slave-trade was legalized in the year 1800, and the rendition of fugitives from bondage was made a part of the national compact, "in violation of the divine law," as Mr. Seward said in 1848. Then, at the close of the last century, the cotton-gin was invented, making every black baby worth one hundred dollars. New England manufacturers and Northern merchants were bound close to the Southern planters. The era of political good feeling and of wide prosperity had dawned. After the Missouri Compromise of 1820, John Quincy Adams thought slavery so entrenched that disunion was the only hope of the slave. Apologies for slavery were rife; consciences were blinded; nothing must be done to disturb the slave-masters; such disturbance would endanger the Union. Colonization societies, supported by good

and great men, planned to send the negroes, who had been stolen from Africa, back to its pestilence and barbarism, with or without their consent.

Garrison began his agitation in 1831, and for nearly twenty years the nation had become a great debating society, with slavery as the exasperating theme. Garrison and Phillips not only championed Abolition, but came at last to advocate a peaceable separation of the States, as best for the slave, freeing the North from fatal compromises. Meanwhile Webster was teaching a large portion of the American people to love the Union, and in his great debate with the South Carolina nullifiers he was storing, in the national arsenal, the moral and intellectual ammunition which was finally to blaze forth from a million rifles to destroy slavery and make the Union perpetual.

But the love of the Union, which was the key to the public life of such men as Henry Clay, persuaded him, and most of the great statesmen of the country, to consent to compromises which might put off the coming conflict, but could not for ever avert it. The policy of maintaining an equilibrium between the free and slave States was a most difficult one. The Mexican War had added largely to the national domain and had also quickened the national conscience and fear with regard to slavery. How shall the new territory be organized? Shall new free States be permitted to disturb the equilibrium?

Henry Clay, on the 29th of January, 1850, introduced into the Senate his famous compromise measures, which were to secure the final and perfect adjustment of the slavery question. "His object was

to save the Union, and he reasoned thus: The Union is threatened by the disunion spirit growing up in the South. That disunion spirit springs from an apprehension that slavery is not safe in the Union. The disunion spirit must be disarmed by concessions calculated to quiet that apprehension. These concessions must be such as not to alarm the North."<sup>1</sup>

The perfect settlement, which he hoped to patch up, provided that California should be speedily admitted as a free State, that New Mexico and Utah should be organized as territories without any restriction in regard to slavery, that Texas should receive money for the loss of New Mexican territory which she claimed, that slavery was not to be abolished in the District of Columbia without the consent of Maryland, that the slave-trade in the District should be prohibited, that a more effective Fugitive Slave Law should be passed and that Congress had no power to prevent and hinder the trade in slaves between the slave-holding States.

Thus was the irrepressible conflict to be repressed. "We Americans," said Mr. Lowell, "are very fond of this glue of compromise. Like so many quack cements, it is advertised to make the mended parts of the vessel stronger than those which have never been broken, but, like them, it will not stand hot water." The great conflict in America could be settled only when settled right.

Henry Clay was a patriot and, though a slave-

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<sup>1</sup>"Life of Henry Clay," by Carl Schurz, Vol. II., pp. 329.

holder, was a lover of freedom. He did not believe that slavery was a blessing. "If it were," he said "the principle on which it is maintained would require that one portion of the white race should be reduced to bondage to serve another portion of the same race, when black subjects of slavery could not be obtained ; and that in Africa, where they may entertain as great preference for their color as we do for ours, they would be justified in reducing the white race to slavery in order to secure the blessings which that state is said to diffuse." But Henry Clay never understood clearly, in spite of his preference for freedom, how utterly impossible it was for liberty and slavery to keep house together. John Quincy Adams, Garrison, Phillips, Sumner, Chase, Lincoln, and Henry Ward Beecher perceived that the Union could not endure half free and half slave.

But the chief bulwark of slavery was, after all, the National Constitution, and a profound, wise, and patriotic love of a united country. The South had become greatly excited, and disunion talk was rife in the capital in 1850. But the compromises granted held the Southern statesmen back from making the fatal mistake of 1861. As Mr. Blaine has wisely said : "In the passions aroused by the agitation over slavery, Southern men failed to see (what in cooler moments they could readily perceive) that the existence of the Union and the guarantees of the Constitution were the shield and safeguard of the South. The long contest they had been waging with the anti-slavery men of the free States had blinded Southern zealots to the essential strength of their position so long as their States continued to be members

of the Federal Union. But for the constant presence of national power, and its constant exercise under the provisions of the Constitution, the South would have no protection against the anti-slavery assaults of the civilized world."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Twenty Years of Congress," Vol. I., p. 176.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE GLUE OF COMPROMISE, A QUACK CEMENT.

MR. BEECHER became a great factor in the anti-slavery discussion, not through any words spoken from his pulpit, but by a masterly article contributed in 1850 to *The Independent*. This religious paper had been established in New York two years before, and had for its editors men of such conspicuous force and ability as Leonard Bacon, Richard S. Storrs, Jr., and Joseph P. Thompson. But Mr. Beecher's famous Star paper, "Shall We Compromise?" published February 21, 1850, was a national event. It is well known that the dying John C. Calhoun had it read to him twice on his sick bed, and said: "The man who says that is right. There is no alternative. It is liberty or slavery."

Beecher showed that Clay's compromise bill, liked neither by the North nor the South, did not touch the seat of the disease. It failed to meet the real issue. The radical and age-long feud between the two systems and the two policies would rage until one or the other achieved a complete victory. "We give Mr. Clay sincere praise for desiring peace. We think it worthy of his reputation to have declared that he would never vote for the extension of slavery. If his compromise had taken that determination as its starting-point, he would have come nearer to our ideas of the

leader which our times and our difficulties demand. It is no sportive joust upon which our nation is gazing. The shield of the challenger hangs out for no blunted lance. Like Ivanhoe, we should have been glad had Mr. Clay struck the shield of Bois-Gilbert with the sharp lance-head, importing earnest battle. One straightforward speech against the extension of slavery, based, not upon political reasons, but on the great principles of humanity and justice; one glowing appeal to the whole nation to take the stand, which he has personally taken, *never to vote for the extension of slavery on either side of any line*; this would have been a noble statesmanship, and crowned the last years of the revered Sage of Ashland with the brightest glory of his life."<sup>1</sup>

The conflict is not the result of any rashness on either side. The theory of democracy or the theory of aristocracy must rule. The society which honors labor and the society which makes it disgraceful must be at war. The North represents the common weal. "There cannot be a commonwealth of slavery. It is class weal and class wealth. The South hopelessly divides society, puts her honors on one side of the cleft."<sup>2</sup>

If the compromises of the Constitution were adopted with the expectation that freedom would eradicate slavery, it is possible to understand the wisdom of the intention at least. But if these compromises were designed to inclose in one permanent Government two radically oppugnent theories they

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 169, 170.



were evidences of extraordinary folly. "We should as soon look for an agreement by which Christ and Belial should jointly undertake to govern this world."

Mr. Beecher made it plain that the conflict reached back into the deeper things of the divine moral order and Providence, and that God's truth and Spirit must come to animate the National Constitution before any peace was possible. The South discovered that slavery could not live and stand still; she claimed the right for extension. "She asked the North to be a partner. For every free State she demanded one State for slavery. One dark orb must be swung into its orbit to groan and travail in pain, for every new orb of liberty over which the morning stars shall sing for joy."<sup>1</sup>

He denounced the fugitive slave clauses in Mr. Clay's Compromise Bill. "Not even the Constitution shall make me unjust. If my patriotic sires confederated in my behalf that I should maintain that instrument, so I will, to the utmost bounds of right. But who with power, which even God denies to Himself, shall by compact foreordain me to the commission of inhumanity and injustice? I disown the act. I repudiate the obligation. Never while I have breath will I help any official miscreant in his base errand of recapturing a fellow man for bondage."<sup>2</sup>

"Ought not Christians, by all the means in their power, to preserve the Union? Yes, by all means that are right. But, dear as the Union is, and ought

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 173.

to be, whenever it comes between a Christian people and their Christian integrity, it becomes a snare. The very value of our Union is to be found in those principles of justice, liberty, and humanity which inspire it. But if by any infernal juggle these principles must be yielded up to preserve the Union, then a corpse only will be left in our arms, deflowered, lifeless, worthless. A Union perpetuated by giving way to injustice—a Union maintained by obedience to the desires of slavery—is but a compact of violence. We emphasize these things because the long-continued cries of politicians have produced among sober Christian men an unquestioned and undisturbed conviction that no evil can be so great as the dissolution of our Union. There are many evils infinitely greater. The loss of a national conscience is greater. The loss of public humanity is greater. And indifference to the condition of millions of miserable creatures, whose degradation, vices, ignorance, and animalism plead with our conscience in their behalf; this would be an unspeakably greater evil. So long as we can maintain the Union on terms which allow us to act with a free conscience, with humanity unviolated, we shall count no sacrifice too dear to maintain it. But religion and humanity are a price too dear to pay even for the Union!"<sup>1</sup>

In this powerful paper Mr. Beecher proclaimed that there was in the country a Conscience Party, augmenting in the North, some day to be organized against the national inhumanity. Speaking for that party, he said: "We can bear much, but we cannot and

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 173-174.

will not bear the guilt of slavery. We regard it as epitomizing every offense which man can commit against man. It takes liberty from those to whom God gave it as the right of all rights. It forbids all food, either for the understanding or the heart. It takes all honesty from the conscience. It takes its defense from virtue, and gives all authority into the hands of lustful or pecuniary cupidity. It scorns the family, and invades it whenever desire or the want of money prevail, with the same coolness with which a drover singles out a heifer, or a butcher strikes down a bullock. These are not the accidents of slavery. They are its legitimate fruits."<sup>1</sup>

Compromises of the Constitution, made on the theory that slavery is to die out, are tolerable, but compromises made on the theory that slavery is national and perpetual are monstrosities. We most solemnly declare, by our belief in humanity, by our hopes in religion, by our faith in Christ, that we will cut every cord of oppression whose force is derived from us. And if, in so doing, men choose to interpose the Constitution, upon their heads be the blame. Palsied be that hand and blasted those lips which shall make our Constitution, ordained for Freedom, the instrument of bondage and cruelty."<sup>2</sup>

He announced his programme of open hostility to every party or measure friendly to the interests of slavery and made the prophecy that the time was to come "when men will look back upon this system as we now look back upon the dungeons and tribunals

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 174-175.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 175.

of the Inquisition. In that day, many a man will deny his parentage and forswear the ancestors who either forged fetters for the slave, or more meanly blew the bellows for those who wrought at the anvil of oppression. May my children to the latest generation, in looking back to my example, take courage, and strike home for Liberty and Humanity."<sup>1</sup>

He announced his eternal hostility to compromises which seek for peace rather than justice. He announced his purpose to abide by the Union. "No vandal outrage shall *our* hands commit. We shall honor it by obedient lives, consecrate it by our prayers, purify it from the dross of injustice, and give to it such foundations of Right as shall hold it steadfast amid all the revolutionary concussions of our day." And then with prophetic insight into a possible civil war he said: "If there be those who cannot abide with the Union because it is pure and religious, just and humane, let them beware of that tumultuous scene into which they purpose to leap. . . . But if our Charter Oak is to be dismembered, God be thanked that its roots are planted in the soil of Freedom. There they will spread; its trunk and its mightiest branches will abide. The sun and the soil that nourished its infancy yet remain to repair what time and storms may mutilate. Beneath its shadow the poor and oppressed shall find shelter."<sup>2</sup>

The battle in the United States Congress over Clay's Compromise panacea was one of the most memorable in American annals. Besides Mr. Clay

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 177.

there were in the Senate at that time Webster, Cass, Benton, Calhoun, Stephen A. Douglas, Jefferson Davis, William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, Hannibal Hamlin, John P. Hale, James M. Mason, Samuel Houston. "At no time before or since in the history of the Senate," wrote Mr. Blaine, "has its membership been so illustrious, its weight of character and ability so great. The period marked the meeting and dividing line between two generations of statesmen. The eminent men who had succeeded the leaders of the Revolutionary era were passing away, but the most brilliant of their number were still lingering, unabated in natural force, resplendent in personal fame. Their successors in public responsibility, if not their equals in public regard and confidence, were already upon the stage preparing for, and destined to act in, the bloodiest and most memorable of civil struggles."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Webster's 7th of March speech excited intense hostility among the anti-slavery Whigs of the Northern States. Many old friends abandoned him, and the Conscience Party of the North was aroused to a more strenuous activity against the slave-power. The Fugitive Slave Bill became law and was put into execution. "The plantation barons were sulky. Their biped 'property' had mastered enough astronomy to distinguish the North Star, and had mustered enough manhood to run for it. Meanwhile, large sections of the Free States covertly coöperated with the fugitives, and openly refused to return them to the house of bondage. The scene was of bewildering confusion—dizzy as a dance of dervishes."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Twenty Years of Congress," p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Carlos Martyn's "Life of Wendell Phillips," p. 224.

Whittier sang:

The evil days have come,—the poor  
Are made a prey ;  
Bar up the hospitable door,  
Put out the firelights, point no more  
The wanderer's way.

For Pity now is crime ; the chain  
Which binds our States  
Is melted at her hearth in twain,  
Is rusted by her tears' soft rain :  
Close up her gates.

Mr. Beecher was, of course, in rebellion against the atrocious law which denied trial by jury, opportunity on the part of the accused to summon witnesses in his own defense, or a hearing before a competent judge. "Dumb, undefended, his destiny at the mercy of any accuser, and of a commissioner possibly ignorant and possibly vicious, the accused was consigned to a state worse than death."<sup>1</sup>

An underground railroad, designed to facilitate the escape of fugitives from bondage, was actively manned the whole distance from Mason and Dixon's line to the Canadian border. On the other hand, colored people at the North who were free were often kidnapped and hurried into Southern slavery.

Those were days of hot feeling. Mr. Beecher, in a Star paper that was published in October, 1850, said: "If in God's providence fugitives ask bread or shelter, raiment or conveyance from us, my own children shall lack bread before they; my own flesh

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 239.

will sting with cold ere they shall lack raiment; I will both shelter them, conceal them, or speed their flight, and while they are under my shelter or my convoy they shall be to me as my own flesh and blood." The principle of his action is thus described: "Every citizen must obey a law which inflicts injury upon his person, estate, and civil privilege, until legally redressed; but no citizen is bound to obey the law which commands *him* to *inflict* injury upon another. We must *endure*, but never *commit* wrong."

"Our policy for the future is plain. All the natural laws of God are warring upon slavery. We have only to let the process go on. Let slavery alone. Let it go to seed. Hold it to its own natural fruit. Cause it to abide by itself. Cut off every branch that hangs beyond the wall, every root that spreads. Shut it up to itself and let it alone. We do not ask to interfere with the internal policy of a single State by congressional enactments: we will not ask to take one guarantee from the institution; we only ask that a line be drawn about it; that an insuperable bank be cast up; that it be fixed and for ever settled that slavery must find no new sources, new fields, new prerogatives, but that it must abide in its place, subject to all legitimate changes which will be brought upon it by the spirit of a nation essentially democratic, by schools taught by enlightened men, by colleges sending annually into every profession thousands bred to justice and hating its reverse, by Churches preaching a Gospel that has always heralded civil liberty, by manufactories which always thrive best when the masses are free and refined, and, therefore, have their wants multiplied by free agriculture and free commerce."

Mr. Beecher's policy, thus outlined, while coming far short of the absolute justice demanded by the Abolitionists, was substantially the policy which the Republican party was destined to inaugurate and pursue. The difficulty with this policy, however, was that it could not possibly be executed without arousing the South to fiercer hostilities. By its very nature slavery *must* expand or die. Liberty might, as Mr. Beecher well said, if left alone, be always a match for oppression, but under the circumstances in America the South, believing in slavery and taught by Calhoun to believe also in secession, was steadily making ready, with the continued growth of this anti-slavery movement in the North, for the great Civil War.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A LIGHT IN AMERICA'S DARK AGE.

WITHOUT any personal bitterness, Mr. Beecher continued his fearless agitation. One result of it was this, that personal abuse was showered upon him without stint. As the years went by, the pro-slavery feeling became so bitter in the North that Mr. Beecher "naturally received the largest share of abuse from pro-slavery journals, and incurred the lion's part of mercantile, commercial, and social displeasure."<sup>1</sup> His name became a hated name; he aroused all sorts of opposition, and it penetrated all grades of society, from the highest to the lowest. It was evident that if hatred could ever find a weak point in his armor, if ever personal scandal should attach itself to his reputation, there would be wide and eager credulity on the part of great masses of his own countrymen. There were ecclesiastical circles, large and influential, where, for many years, his name was mentioned only to be abused. He was lampooned in *Harper's Weekly*, which printed a full-page cartoon of him declining to administer communion to Washington because the Father of his Country owned slaves.

In the time of the struggle for freedom in Kansas,

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<sup>1</sup> Howard's "Life of Henry Ward Beecher," p. 243.

Plymouth Church and its pastor were the objects of intense malignity on the part of the roughs in New York and Brooklyn; and one Sunday evening, in 1856, a company of "lewd fellows of the baser sort" entered Plymouth Church for the purpose of cleaning out the accursed Abolition nest. A large police force, however, were present, and fifty gentlemen, including some of the trustees of the Church, armed themselves with revolvers, and the hostile demonstration was confined to the muttering of curses and threats against all negro-worshippers as the would-be mob passed into the street again.

A fearless and powerful speaker, with a great Church behind him sympathetic with his utterances, dealing vigorous blows at every form of iniquity, prejudice, and sluggish conservatism, Mr. Beecher became more hated than any other of the anti-slavery leaders. Garrison and Phillips would have excited perhaps intenser malignity, but they were deemed by many such extremists and fanatics, and their following was so much smaller and their connection with the Church so slender, that they escaped some of the bitter contumely which smote the popular pastor of Plymouth Church. "Whenever he spoke, the size of the church or hall alone decided the number of hearers. Without ambition, without self-seeking, with a simple, earnest desire to do his work as God revealed it to him, unrasped by hatreds, he had come to a place and leadership as broad and high as there was in the land."<sup>1</sup> In daily augmenting numbers the friends of freedom gathered

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 245.

about him. The service which he rendered the great cause cannot easily be estimated, and has never been overestimated.

One of the bravest services which he rendered was his championship of the right of free speech when Wendell Phillips was prevented by the mob from uttering his convictions in New York. This was in May, 1850. The meetings of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the Broadway Tabernacle, famous for the revival services which had been held in it by President Charles G. Finney, had been broken up. Threats had preceded the coming of the leading Abolitionists to this anniversary. "The air was full of coming violence, of which a truly satanic Scotchman, James Gordon Bennett, editor of the *New York Herald*, was the prime invoker."<sup>1</sup>

As an example of the pro-slavery newspaper utterances of that time, and as a reminder of the Dark Ages of American history, it may be well to recall one of the editorial utterances of that leading New York journal. "Never, in the time of the French Revolution and blasphemous atheism, was there more malevolence and unblushing wickedness avowed than by this same Garrison. Indeed, he surpasses Robespierre and his associates, for he has no design of building up. His only object is to destroy."<sup>2</sup>

Captain Rynders and his ruffians had succeeded in breaking up the Abolitionists' meeting in the Tabernacle before Wendell Phillips could speak. They had

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<sup>1</sup>"Life of William Lloyd Garrison Told by His Children," Vol. III. p. 281.

Life of William Lloyd Garrison," Vol. III., p. 283.

also been shut out from another meeting-place. But the Graham Institute in Brooklyn was secured for Wendell Phillips by a friend, William A. Hall, who was a fervent Abolitionist. Mr. Beecher was to pray at this meeting. A committee of the Institute, however, withdrew the invitation on account of the intense excitement. Was free discussion ended for Brooklyn as well as New York? Beecher saved the priceless boon for his own city and helped to save it for the Nation.

Mr. Henry C. Bowen encouraged him to offer to Phillips the use of Plymouth Church. Beecher went to the trustees, man by man, and most of them gladly gave written permission. One or two were inclined to withhold it. He made it a personal matter, however, and said: "You and I will break if you don't give me this permission," and they signed. The audience in attendance was immense, and detectives were there in disguise to preserve order. "I was amazed," wrote Mr. Beecher to Oliver Johnson, "at the unagitated agitator—so calm, so fearless, so incisive—every word a bullet. I never heard a more effective speech than Mr. Phillips's that night. He seemed inspired, and played with his audience (turbulent, of course), as Gulliver might with the Lilliputians. He had the dignity of Pitt, the vigor of Fox, the wit of Sheridan, the satire of Junius—and a grace and music all his own. Then for the first time did Plymouth Church catch an echo of those matchless tones. I mean it shall not be the last time."<sup>1</sup>

Another form of persecution, in these days of

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Wendell Phillips," by Carlos Martyn, p. 231.

slavery madness and Union-saving patriotism, aimed to "boycott" Northern merchants and manufacturers who had anti-slavery tendencies. A black-list of New York "Abolition" merchants was made out by a committee, and the South was told to withdraw its patronage from these destroyers of the Union. Mr. Henry C. Bowen was on this list, and Mr. Beecher wrote for him a card which became famous, and was a battle-cry for independent anti-slavery business men: "My goods are for sale, but not my principles."

Mr. Beecher, like Curtis and Phillips, earnestly fought the un-Christian ostracism which banished negroes from churches, lecture-halls, theatres, first-class railway cars, gentlemen's cabins, and the white omnibuses of Fulton Ferry. Frederick Douglass was invited by him to Plymouth Church, and to a seat on the platform by the pastor. Mr. Beecher would not ride, and urged his friends not to ride, in the conveyances placarded with the words, "Colored people not allowed to ride in this omnibus." In a fortnight's time the placards were gone.

In the teeth of newspaper threats of violence, he championed the right of ministers to use their pulpits as batteries against slavery. Fortifying himself with materials gathered from Southern sources, he made a tremendous onslaught, showing, from Southern testimony, that slaves had no Bible to read, no family altar, and were practically heathen in a Christian country. "It is vain to tell us that hundreds of thousands of slaves are Church members. Does that save women from the lust of their owners? Does it save their children from being sold? Does it save parents from separation? In the shameless pro-

essions every week from the Atlantic to the Gulf are to be found slaves ordained to preach the Gospel, members of Churches, baptized children, Sunday-school scholars carefully catechized, full of Gospel texts, fat and plump for market. What is religion worth to a slave, except as a consolation from despair when the hand that breaks to him the bread of communion on Sunday takes the price of his blood and bones on Monday, and bids him godspeed on his pilgrimage from old Virginia tobacco fields to the cotton plantations of Alabama?"

He showed that slavery at the North was on the basis of the Hebrew law, while slavery at the South had adopted the Roman civil law as the basis of its code. In his speech before the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, delivered in New York on the 6th day of May, 1851, he discussed the relations of slavery to Christianity with the most telling and forceful eloquence: "It was Lord Brougham, I think, who said where the slave-trade was so profitable as to pay three hundred per cent., not all the navies of the globe could stop it; and when slavery began to pay enormous profits, not all the power of Christianity could stop it, especially when ministers of the Gospel were found to step in and baptize it, and call it Christian."<sup>1</sup>

Discussing the Hebrew bond service he said, that the Hebrew master was obliged to give his bondman a religious education. "Now in our modern system of education there is first the family, and then the school, and the magazine, and newspaper. But then

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 179.

there were only five books, called the Pentateuch, and the whole system of education was comprised in instruction in these five books; and in these every slave must be educated. If the same regulation was carried out now, it would require the Southern slave-owner to send his slave to the academy, and then put him through some Northern college, and graduate him, before he tied him down to the plough or hoe of the plantation. That was the Hebrew idea of slavery."<sup>1</sup>

Amid much hissing, soon drowned by cheers, he said: "At the South adultery among the slaves is not held to be a reason for Church discipline. I am glad to see some sense of shame for this. The public conscience is being aroused. Do you know that at the South in marrying slaves the minister leaves out the words, 'What God has joined together let no man put asunder'?" It must be left out, for perhaps in a few weeks a husband will be separated from a wife and sent to another plantation, and then if he chooses he can take another wife, and if he is a member of the Church it does not hurt his standing, and then another and another, till perhaps he may have twenty wives, and still his letter of recommendation from one Church to another is good as ever." A voice—"*There are men in New York who have twenty wives.*" "I am sorry for them. I go in for their immediate emancipation."<sup>2</sup> [Great cheering.]

He attacked with unsparing vigor the Fugitive Slave Law, among other reasons because it tended to

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," pp. 184, 185.

make an impassable gulf between the North and South, because of its inhumanity, because it required what was essentially wrong, because it stirred up ill blood, because it abridged the liberty of free men, and because bad laws are treason to good government. He replied to the Biblical argument for sending back fugitive slaves, founded on the return of Onesimus as follows: "There are two ways of sending fugitives back into slavery. One is the way Paul sent back the slave Onesimus. Now, if people will adopt that way I will not object. In the first place, he instructed him in Christianity and led him to become a Christian; then he wrote a letter and sent it by Onesimus himself. Now, I should like to see Marshal —, or Marshal somebody else, of this city, send back a slave in this way. In the first place the Marshal would take him and teach him the catechism, and pray with him, and convert him into brotherly love; then the slave goes of his own free will to his master and walks into the house, and with his broad, black, beaming face, says: 'How d'ye do, my brother? and how d'ye do, my sister?'"<sup>1</sup>

To this sort of argument there was no reply.

A well-known illustration of his faculty of instantaneous repartee claims record in connection with this speech. He said: "The slave is made just good enough to be a good slave and no more. It is a penitentiary offense to teach him." Here some one in the corner of the gallery yelled out: "It's a lie!" "Well, whether it's a penitentiary offense or not, I shall not argue with the gentleman in the

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 252, 253.



corner as doubtless he has been there and ought to know."

In closing the speech he made a magnificent appeal to conscience as the safeguard of republican institutions. "Human nature is a poor affair—man is but a pithy, porous, flabby substance, till you put conscience into him; and as for building a republic on men who do not hold to the right of private conscience, who will not follow their own consciences rather than that of any priest or public, you might as well build a Custom House in Wall Street on a foundation of cotton-wool! But the nation that regards conscience more than anything else, above all customs and all laws, is, like New England, with its granite hills, immovable and invincible; and the nation that does not regard conscience is a mere base of sand, and quicksand, too, at that. If you want this country to be like Turkey, or Egypt, or Algiers, give up the rights of private conscience, and you will have it so soon enough.

Yes! the time will come when, on reading the epitaph of a man, which records that here lies A. B., author of a learned commentary on this or that book, and defender of the doctrine that the people must give up their consciences to magistrate and priest, the people will lift up their hands in astonishment and exclaim: 'God have mercy on his soul.'"<sup>1</sup>

There is a majestic severity in this speech, spoken by one of the most tender-hearted and sympathetic of men. He tried hard to calm the natural expression of his indignation, but sometimes it burst

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 194.

forth in thunderbolts of righteous wrath. "It is with a sense of shame that we see strong words for oppression granted an unapologized liberty to walk up and down as they will; while he who speaks for Freedom must rake up his ardor under the ashes of a tame propriety, and stand to answer for want of a Gospel spirit, if indignation at double and treble wrongs do sometimes give forth a bolt! Nevertheless, we hope; we trust; we pray; and hoping, trusting, and praying, we soothe ourselves in such thoughts as these: 'From this shame, too, thou shalt go forth, O world! God, who, unwearied sitting on the circle of the heavens, hath beheld and heard the groanings and travailings of pain until now, and caused Time to destroy them one by one, shall ere long destroy thee, thou abhorred and thrice damnable oppression cancerously eating the breast of Liberty.'"

"And if in this day, after notable examples of heroic men in heroic ages, when life itself often paid for fidelity, the pulpit is to be mined and sapped by insincere friends and insidious enemies, and learn to mix the sordid prudence of business with the sonorous and thrice heroic counsels of Christ, then, O my soul, be not thou found conspiring with this league of iniquity; that so, when in that august day of retribution God shall deal punishment in flaming measures to all hireling and coward ministers, thou shalt not go down, under double-bolted thunders, lower than miscreant Sodom or thrice polluted Gomorrah!"<sup>1</sup> Have we not here a noble and unconscious echo of some of the more sonorous passages of Milton's prose?

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography" p. 252.

Such was the prevailing disposition among large sections of the Northern people, including many Northern ministers, to do the will of the slave-masters, that it is not surprising that the people of the North were deemed cowards, and poltroons, and inferiors. In truth this opinion was not uprooted from the Southern mind till the Union armies confronted the slaveholders' Confederacy. Some Northern men went further than the South in their apologies for slavery. James Freeman Clark told of a Boston friend who, in the home of the Marshalls, in Kentucky, spoke in favor of "the institution." Mrs. Marshall, who was a slave-owner, replied: "It will not do, sir, to defend slavery in *this* family. The Marshalls and the Birneys have always been Abolitionists!" Mr. Beecher owned an Episcopal prayer book, in the front of which was Ary Scheffer's picture of Christ healing and blessing the unfortunate ones, the *Christus Consolator*. But the picture of a slave among the other suffering ones, lifting his hands in appeal, was cut out, so that it might be free from any taint of Abolitionism!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT CONTINUES.

THE great excitements of 1850 were followed by something of a calm in the succeeding year, a calm to be disturbed by the publication of Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin." People were settling down into a sullen and stubborn feeling that the Union must be preserved at any price. The peril of dissolution had apparently been lessened by the passing of a series of bills following the line of Clay's compromise measures, and the great conservative instincts of the country were banded in selfish and unholy alliance against any further agitation of the slavery question. Mobs were ready to put down free speech; the tone of the press was virulent; the anti-slavery spirit must be crushed if possible. The South, however, made the serious mistake of pushing her right to capture and return fugitive slaves.

In December, 1851, Kossuth came to America as the nation's guest. He represented European liberty, the struggle of the Hungarian people against military and imperial despotism. With his marvelous powers of eloquent speech he gained an enthusiastic hearing and reception from the American people. By Mr. Beecher's invitation he spoke in Plymouth Church and ten thousand dollars was thus secured for the

cause of Hungarian freedom. Mr. Beecher in an effective Star paper showed how incongruous it was for the nation to honor the champion of Hungarian liberty and at the same time tread down oppressively the more helpless slave on its own soil.

In 1852, Webster and Clay, the giants of the struggle to save the Union by moral compromises, passed away; Charles Sumner entered the Senate, a man with whom compromise on the slavery question was an impossibility, and Franklin Pierce was elected to the Presidency. His predecessor, Millard Fillmore, will always be chiefly remembered as the signer of the infamous Fugitive Slave Bill.

"Personally, privately, I honor Mr. Fillmore; but as a public man he had no political conscience. . . . He gave up Liberty to be crucified between Southern slavery and Northern mammon; and then washed his hands, and said, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person.'"<sup>1</sup>

Franklin Pierce, though achieving a great victory at the polls, is likely to be pleasantly remembered only as the friend of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The Whigs and Democrats had both agreed to accept the Compromise Measures as the final settlement of the slavery question. But both the great political parties together, however stern their opposition to practical Christianity, could not destroy the tenacious life of the anti-slavery movement. Speaking of the politicians who wondered at the persistence of the spirit of revolt against slavery, Mr. Beecher said: "It is no fanaticism that animates or controls

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<sup>1</sup> "Plymouth Pulpit Sermons," Vol. II., p. 15.

it, it is the religious principle that is the secret of the strength of this cause; it is because Jesus Christ is alive, and there are Jesus Christ men who count this cause dearer than their lives."<sup>1</sup>

In many respects he was the greatest moral leader whom God has given to American political life. Almost always he was in the vanguard and thus exposed to constant attack. A lover of peace, he was continually at war. There have been many other men who were far greater masters of intellectual and formal logic, though few men have surpassed him in the power of rapid and heated argumentation before a large assembly; but no other American of his time grasped more firmly, or applied more wisely to the problems then in hand, the principles of moral logic. The action of this man, who had no fears, was determined by his moral convictions. This made him a great reformer.

Seeing with the prophetic clearness of a Savonarola the position which a man dedicated to righteousness ought to occupy, he was in his place, and that was almost always where the battle was thickest. The weapons which he saw fit to use were not merely those of "sweetness and light." Of a certain class of apologists for slavery he had said in 1850: "They hang themselves up in the shambles of every Southern market; they trust the pliant good nature of the North, and are only fearful lest they should fail to be mean enough to please the South." Of course, the enemies of such a man hungered for an opportunity to pull him down and they never failed to improve it. Any-

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 257.

thing against him which could be twisted into the appearance of moral obliquity was seized as eagerly in 1852 as in 1872.

In "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Mrs. Stowe, after describing the selling of a child from its mother's arms, took occasion to reprobate the Christian ministers who taught that the institution of slavery "has no evils but such as are inseparable from any other relations in social and domestic life." Dr. Joel Parker, of Hartford, to whom this sentiment was ascribed by Mrs. Stowe, and who had not contradicted it, though it had been printed in many newspapers, both American and English, threatened to sue Mrs. Stowe for libel. On account of the aroused moral feeling in the North, it was getting uncomfortable to have one's apologies for slavery exposed.

Mr. Beecher attempted to act as a mediator and peacemaker, with "a confidence which was born of sincerity and inexperience." He found both willing to write letters of explanation which modified the positions of each. Over the signatures of Dr. Parker and Mrs. Stowe, he published both letters and went West on a lecturing trip, vainly thinking that he had done a good service. "Instead of making peace between them, he found, as result of his labors, their differences increased and embittered, and himself charged with forgery both of letter and signature."<sup>1</sup>

A fierce and bitter attack was made upon him along the whole line of pro-slavery conservatism, and his downfall was surely expected. Mr. Beecher was to be routed from his entrenchments. But the poisoned

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 260.

arrow met an impenetrable shield. "The overthrow was not accomplished, and he stood, at the end, fully vindicated from all the aspersions of his enemies."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing in his whole life had given him deeper sorrow than this event; he had labored honestly to avert what seemed to him a shame and disgrace, and found himself exposed to every form of contumely. During all this painful experience he felt that not a single promise of God had been left unfulfilled. He said: "I know that it has been a better sermon to me than was ever preached by human lips." And again he wrote: "Had I ever doubted the promises of God I should now find every shadow swept away; and I surely count the little annoyance which this perversion of honor and truth in these unprincipled men has caused me not worthy to be mentioned in the joy which I have had in being folded into the very bosom of my Saviour." And again he wrote: "It has pleased God to so graciously stand by me in this fiercest attack of my life that if every friend in the world had abandoned me I should not have been alone."<sup>2</sup>

Thus he was unconsciously girding himself for the bitterer experiences, the sorer trials, of his later life.

It was not merely the American friends of slavery that Mr. Beecher attacked. When John Mitchell, the "great Irish patriot," had been warmly welcomed in New York, and had dared to write that it was neither a crime, nor a wrong, nor even a peccadillo, to hold, buy, and sell slaves, and keep them to

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 262.



their work by flogging, Mr. Beecher gave this spurious apostle of liberty such a whipping as few men ever more richly deserved. "Once you stood like some great oak whose wide circumference was lifted up above all the pastures, the glory of all beholders, and a covert for a thousand timid singing birds! Now you lie at full length along the ground, with mighty ruptured roots ragged and upturned to Heaven, with broken boughs and despoiled leaves! Never again shall husbandmen predict spring from your swelling buds! Never again shall God's singing birds of liberty come down through all the heavenly air to rest themselves on your waving top! Fallen! Uprooted! Doomed to the axe and the hearth."<sup>3</sup>

The perpetual compromises of 1850 lasted about four years! Liberty was getting the advantage in the battle for the possession of the American continent. The only area for the expansion of slavery lay in the direction of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska and the slave-masters set their eager eyes on that fair domain. What Lowell had sung at an earlier time was true then:

"Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,  
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the  
earth with blood,  
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer day,  
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable prey;  
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless children  
play?"

The great Kansas fight was on, when Stephen A. Douglas, in January, 1854, in reporting to the United

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<sup>3</sup> "Biography," p. 266.

States Senate a bill for the organizing of the new Territories, brought in the proposition to repeal what for thirty-four years had been held to be almost as sacred as the Constitution itself, the Missouri Compromise. According to this proposition slavery was no longer to be excluded as a matter of course north of the prescribed line, but, under the theory of squatter sovereignty the inhabitants of the new Territories were to decide for themselves what should be their domestic institutions! The South was determined to make slavery national, and Douglas's proposition gave them a new field where they might wage successful fight.

Flaming indignation burned in liberty-loving hearts throughout the North. A protest was signed by three thousand New England clergymen against the action which Douglas proposed. "We protest against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as a great moral wrong; as a breach of faith eminently unjust to the moral principles of the community and subversive of all confidence in national engagements; as a measure full of danger to the peace and even the existence of our beloved Union, and exposing us to the righteous judgments of the Almighty." In the storm of opposition to this repeal both the Democratic and Whig parties were ultimately broken up.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE PILGRIMS ON THE KANSAS PRAIRIES.

MR. BEECHER's activity with voice and pen was constant and intense. In a Star paper on "The Crisis" he appealed to the people to roll their thunder of indignation against the graceless and recreant herd in Congress who were planning this perfidy and outrage. He urged individuals, families, and Churches to pour their petitions into Washington. "In this solemn hour of peril, when all men's hearts sink within them, we have an appeal to those citizens who rebuked us for our fears in 1850.

"Did you not declare that that should be a finality? Did you not say that by a concession of conscience we should thereafter have peace?

"Is this the peace? Is this the fulfillment of your promise? Is not this the very sequence which we told you would come? That Compromise was a ball of frozen rattlesnakes. You turned them in your hands then with impunity. We warned and besought. We protested and adjured. You persisted in bringing them into the dwelling. You laid them down before the fire. Now where are they? They are crawling all around. Their fangs are striking death into every precious interest of liberty! It is your work."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 274.

"The North is both bound and asleep. It is bound with bonds of unlawful compromise. You, ministers of Christ, held her limbs, while the gaunt and worthy minions of oppression moved about, twisting inextricable cords about her hands and feet; or, like Saul, stood by, holding the garments of those that slew the martyr. The poor Northern conscience has been like a fly upon a spider's web. Her statesmen, and not a few of her ministers, have rolled up the struggling insect, singing fainter and fainter, with webs of sophistry, till it now lies a miserable, helpless victim and slavery is crawling up to suck its vital blood."<sup>1</sup>

When the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was accomplished in September 1854, the battle was at once transferred from the halls in Washington to the prairies of Kansas. Then was witnessed a movement which showed that the spirit of the Revolution, the spirit which settled New England, the spirit which sent the *Mayflower* across the Atlantic was not extinguished. Whittier sang of the Kansas emigrants:

"We cross the prairie as of old  
The Pilgrims crossed the sea,  
To make the West, as they the East,  
The homestead of the free."

"We go to rear a wall of men  
On Freedom's southern line,  
And plant beside the cotton-tree  
The rugged northern pine."

By terrorism, fraudulent elections, and every kind of perfidy and violence, the emissaries of slavery, headed by the acting Vice-President of the United

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 275.

States, Senator Atchison, sought to gain and maintain possession of the new territory. A fraudulent legislature, backed by United States Courts, marshals, and soldiers, strove to keep freedom out of Kansas. Monstrous laws were enacted by the villainous legislative body called together by the Lecompton Constitution. The friends of freedom needed to be active. The purpose to rescue the virgin territory from the despoiler became a holy enthusiasm in the North. Emigrant societies were organized to redeem Kansas.

Up-bearing, like the Ark of old,  
The Bible in our van,  
We go to test the truth of God  
Against the fraud of man.

In July, 1854, the beautiful town of Lawrence, destined to achieve a splendid fame in the annals of liberty and learning, was founded by noble men from New England. The free-State settlers rallied about the strong leaders, and the Topeka Constitution was adopted in October, 1855. Then followed the bloody Kansas war, which was to fire the heart of one grim old Puritan, and nerve him to strike the preliminary blow, by which the slave system in America was at last to fall.

Not satisfied with the effort to capture Kansas, slavery sought also to buy Cuba from Spain, and, if this were not possible, threatened to tear that Pearl of the Antilles from the Spanish Crown. In 1857 came the infamous Dred Scott decision of the United States Supreme Court, which gave the slaveholder the right to take his human property into any part of the United States territory. The anti-slavery leaders

felt, as never before, that the Constitution was being perverted from the intent of its founders, while the Abolitionists became more certain than ever that the Constitution was a covenant with death and a league with hell.

These years were among the most critical in the anti-slavery struggle. Mr. Beecher felt the supreme importance of the contest, and discerned that a great crisis must be sternly met. When the Missouri Compromise was repealed, and the doctrine of squatter sovereignty promulgated, he saw immediately that every effort must be put forth to strengthen freedom in Kansas. With all the fiery zeal, begotten of intense conviction, he flung his whole force into this fight. Up and down the land he lectured, and in Plymouth Church and elsewhere, as he spoke for freedom, he collected money to supply the settlers in Kansas both with Bibles and rifles. "Some of the rifles," it is said, "were sent in boxes marked Bibles, but without his knowledge, and so passed in safety through Missouri and the enemy's lines. Hence the term 'Beecher's Bibles' came to be applied to these effective weapons."<sup>1</sup>

The great War Governor of Indiana, afterwards Senator Morton, described on one occasion a long conversation which he had with Mr. Beecher, in which the pastor of Plymouth Church went thoroughly over the whole ground of the anti-slavery struggle, marked the principles which should control it, and the policies which should be followed. The conversation made such an impression upon the

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 283.

patriotic son of Indiana that, near the end of his life, he expressed a strong conviction that Mr. Beecher was the greatest statesman of his time. And as we read what he wrote and said in 1854, and the years immediately following, we understand some of the grounds for this noble eulogy. With the clearest perception of principles, he had that wisdom of boldness which is a chief characteristic of great statesmanship in times of revolution.

In an article on the defense of Kansas, he said: "A battle is to be fought. If we are wise, it will be bloodless. If we listen to the pusillanimous counsels of men who have never showed one throb of sympathy for liberty, we shall have blood to the horses' bridles. If bold wisdom prevails, the conflict will be settled afar off in Kansas and without blows or blood. But timidity and indifference will bring down blows there which will not only echo in our homes hitherward, but will by-and-by lay the foundation for an armed struggle between the whole North and South.

"Once when England only asserted the right to tax the Colonies without representation, the Colonies rebelled and went to war. But now a foreign legislature has been imposed upon Kansas. That legislature has legalized slavery against the known wishes of nine-tenths of the actual settlers. It has decreed that no man shall enter the Territory who will not take an oath of allegiance to this spurious legislature. It has made it death to give liberty to the man escaping from oppression; it has muzzled the press; it has forbidden discussion. It has made free speech a penitentiary offense. The rights for which the old Colonists fought were superficial compared to these.

These are the rights which lie at the very heart of personal liberty.

“But what is done must be done quickly. Funds must be freely given; arms must be had, even if bought at the price mentioned by our Saviour: ‘He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.’ Young men who would do aught for liberty should take no counsel of fear. Now is the time when a man may do for his country in an hour more than in a whole life besides.”<sup>1</sup>

There was one man in the United States Senate who, with equal force and courage, was doing noble battle in the same cause. The blows he dealt at the Nation’s giant sin came back on his own head. On the 22d of May, 1856, the South Carolina bully, Preston S. Brooks, brought his heavy bludgeon down upon Charles Sumner, as he sat at his desk, unable to rise. Against this outrage the North everywhere protested. Sumner had taken a strong hold on the minds of multitudes of the educated young men in the North. He had touched and roused the Northern conscience and furnished a victorious battle-cry to the political opponents of oppression in the declaration that Freedom was National and that Slavery was sectional. The Quaker poet of Freedom sung of him as one,

“Who to the lettered wealth  
Of ages adds the lore unpriced,  
The wisdom and the moral health,  
The ethics of the school of Christ;

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<sup>1</sup> “Biography,” p. 286.



The statesman to his holy trust,  
As the Athenian Archon, just,  
Struck down, exiled like him for Truth alone."

Mr. Beecher's unequalled power of bringing all his intellectual resources to the front on the instant, when his soul was filled with fiery and overmastering emotion, was impressively and grandly illustrated at the close of an immense meeting in New York City, called to protest against the dastardly outrage committed on the Massachusetts Senator. He had been a quiet and interested listener to the speeches of William M. Evarts and others, who had held the attention of the meeting, but had not satisfied either the feelings or the convictions of the audience. It is one of the strangely interesting facts in the history of popular demonstrations, that the people themselves are sometimes more eloquent, fuller of passionate feeling, readier for an advanced position than those who happen to be their speakers. There were several occasions of this sort after the death of Abraham Lincoln, when the set and formal speeches of able men were very unsatisfactory, but where others who had made no intellectual preparation, but who gave themselves up to the tide of feeling that surged through all hearts, mastered the occasion.

While the meeting was adjourning, Mr. Beecher was discovered in the rear of the hall, and the hungry people demanded that he be called forward to the platform. Mr. Evarts remarked that it would be a great pleasure to hear the distinguished clergyman, but Mr. Beecher was out of the city. Some people, however, shouted: "No, he is here," and very reluctantly, yielding to an irresistible demand, he went to

the platform and pronounced one of the most successful and powerful addresses of his lifetime.

Beginning with a clear narrative of the facts which were in themselves an appeal to passionate hatred of slavery, he was eagerly carried forward into a comprehensive survey of the whole anti-slavery contest, of the principles involved, of the mighty stakes at issue. When we read what were the tremendous effects of this speech, of the waves of flaming enthusiasm that rolled over the excited audience, we remember what was written by Lord Lytton, of the eloquence of Daniel O'Connell:

“ Then did I know what spells of infinite choice  
To rouse and lull, has the sweet human voice;  
Thus did I learn to seize the sudden clew  
To the grand troublous life antique—to view  
Under the rock-stand of Demosthenes  
Unstable Athens heave her noisy seas.”

The next day the people found that it was Beecher's speech which was completely reproduced in the papers, while the others received but slight notice. From that time on, Henry Ward Beecher took rank with the foremost leaders of the anti-slavery movement.

There are few things which he ever wrote that are more scathing than his analysis of the reasons offered by some men for not attending the meetings called to protest against the brutal cowardice and cruelty which struck down Senator Sumner, and which, having been accepted by the South, made the South in part responsible for an almost unparalleled crime.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND ITS GREAT LEADERS.

THE Republican party was now coming to its great life, gathering into its ranks a constantly augmenting number of the best minds and bravest hearts of the country. "During the years 1854 and 1855 it had acquired control of the governments in a majority of the free States, and it promptly called a National Convention to meet in Philadelphia in June, 1856. The Democracy saw at once that a new and dangerous opponent was in the field,—an opponent that stood upon principle and shunned expediency, that brought to its standard a great host of young men, and that won to its service a very large proportion of the talent, the courage, and the eloquence of the North."<sup>1</sup>

No eulogy uttered by the most impassioned orator at a national political convention has perhaps, overstated the significance, glory, and substantial services of that remarkable organization, born of a grand purpose, to oppose the aggressions of slavery. That it raised all the effective barriers ever built against the spread of the slave-power, that it nurtured and organized the anti-slavery sentiment which so many causes had repressed and weakened, that it made

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<sup>1</sup> Blaine's "Twenty Years of Congress," Vol. I., p. 126.

clear to the popular mind the obscured ideals of liberty, and brought out of the gloom the earlier and brighter ideals of the Republic, that it forced upon the South a clear understanding of the impossibility of peaceably nationalizing her peculiar institution, that it furnished the administration, and very largely the military force, which destroyed the colossal rebellion and made the Union permanent, that it adopted and continued a commercial and financial policy which contributed largely to make the United States the richest and most prosperous of nations, that it gathered into its ranks the great mass of the most intelligent and religious forces of the North, that it furnished and trained the illustrious statesmen who are the glory of the second great epoch of American history, that it successfully restored to peace the discordant and dismembered Union, brought about the resumption of specie payments, strengthened and heightened the financial credit of the Government, and rendered a multitude of other services, making its policies so popular that one by one they have been adopted by its opponents; these are facts which justify a patriotic rather than a partisan enthusiasm, and which made Mr. Beecher and many others all the more deeply deplore the later corruptions of the party, and mourn the decadence of the brave spirit out of which it originally sprang.

John C. Frémont was nominated as the leader of the Republican hosts in the Presidential contest of 1856, on a platform pledged to resistance of any further extension of slavery, and any further compromise with slave institutions. The convention in Philadelphia declared it to be "both the right and

the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism,—polygamy and slavery.”

Following the Philadelphia Convention, Mr. Beecher wrote one of the greatest editorials for *The Independent* that ever appeared in an American journal. It revealed an enlightened statesmanship of the highest order. The article was called “On which Side is Peace?” And while it showed that the North desired peace, and that all its interests, agricultural, manufacturing, commercial, social, civil, and religious, demanded peace, the way to secure it was not by further yielding to the demands of slavery. “There are periods in the history of men, and of communities, in which timid counsels are rash and dangerous. When a building is on fire, and quantities of explosive materials are awaiting its approach, the only moderation consists in the most intense courage and desperate daring. He is the prudent man who rushes in between the flame and powder and separates them.”<sup>1</sup>

He showed that the national building was already on fire, that the flame was running to the magazine, that fifteen States in the Union had based their social condition on a system of involuntary servitude, demoralizing to personal habits and political ideas; that liberty of speech and of the press, and liberty of political action were inconsistent with slavery. “If it is right to have slavery, it is right to have its necessary defenses. Ignorance is right if slavery is right. Free speech is wrong if slavery is right. A

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 196.

system of force cannot deal with moral suasion. You cannot lay the foundations of a political system upon the law of Might, and then run up its towers and spires by the doctrine of Right. " <sup>1</sup>

"The same secret, fatal current of necessity, drifts the South toward the extension of slavery. While free States are growing with prodigious disproportion, there can be no doubt that slave States will become imbecile and helpless in comparison. Virginia cannot grow—Pennsylvania cannot stand still. The Carolinas are sinking by the nature of their industry—New York is advancing prodigiously. Georgia has no chance in a match with Ohio. If the slave States stand as they are, and depend upon the inherent energies of their own system, they are doomed, inevitably, to become the last and least." <sup>2</sup>

After showing that the policy of the South was not one of vexatious haughtiness but of necessity, springing from the very organization of her society, he made it plain that wise men would not put into places of supreme national power those who represented this system with all its tendencies, that it would be wrong to give the control of the continent to a system which needed continual enlargement in order to make up year by year its own desperate weakness.

"The men, who denied the right of petition; who made war on Mexico; who introduced Texas as a slave State; who compelled the North, in 1850, to take the compromise, promising that it should be a *finality*; who broke a Nation's word and faith, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 197, 198.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 199.

abolished the Missouri Compromise, promising that Kansas should be free or slave as its people chose; who, before the words of promise were cold, invaded Kansas with armed bands, and committed on the real settlers every crime which is marked in the criminal calendar; who sent thither United States troops, and brought the whole force of the Government to corroborate the Civil War which the South had kindled there; who, failing in intimidating free speech, assaulted with the bludgeon, in the Senate Chamber, one of the noblest national men, and with almost unanimous consent justified the felony—this party have published a platform and nominated a candidate for the next four critical years in our history.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beccher appealed to considerate men not to continue in power the malign forces which he had described. “Will it be possible,” he asked, “with such a history coming on, to avoid a conflict, compared with which anything we have ever known will be child’s play?” “When the arms of the South shall be made strong, and her feet shall be made firm upon the high places of Government, is there anything in the bearing and temper of the South hitherto, which may lead us to hope for moderation? Will not her necessities make her as violent hereafter as heretofore? If the lion’s whelp is dangerous even when kenneled, will it become harmless when grown into the full lion, and roving at its will in unrestrained liberty?”

He showed that the platform on which Mr. Buchan-

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<sup>1</sup>“Patriotic Addresses,” p. 200.

an stood was a platform made wholly of Southern pine. "It stands sharply against Northern doctrines. It portends an open and undisguised sweep of Southern ideas across our whole continent. And unless the North has made up its mind to go into the minority, to give up all the inherent advantages belonging to free labor, to yield up liberty of speech, and freedom of soil, and nationality of legislation, then the election of Mr. Buchanan will be the beginning of an excitement and of a warfare such as has never been dreamed of hitherto."<sup>1</sup>

He showed that while Mr. Buchanan sincerely loved peace every vote for him was a vote for war. "If men wish wilder times, fiercer conflicts, deadlier civil war, let them vote for the Southern platform. Northern moderation now will be bloodshed by and by."

"The only way to peace is that way which shall chain slavery to the place that it now has, and say to the dragon—'In thine own den thou mayest dwell, and lie down in thine own slime. But thou shalt not go forth to ravage free territory, nor leave thy trail upon unspotted soil.'"<sup>2</sup>

Prophetic statesmanship so clear, wise, far-seeing as this is rare at any time. It is no wonder that Mr. Beecher was early recognized not only as a powerful reformer, but as possessing in an unusual degree every statesmanlike quality of mind. With the hearty consent of his own Church, Mr. Beecher entered on the memorable canvass of 1856, with all

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 202.



the vigor of the conviction which had been nurtured and deepened in previous contests. He made three hours' speeches, several times a week, before audiences of many thousands, especially in those districts of New York State where the old-time Whigs were attempting to run in a third candidate.

A warm friend of Mr. Beecher (Mr. N. D. Pratt, of Chicago) furnishes the following interesting reminiscence of this campaign: "In the year 1856, when Frémont was the first Presidential candidate of the Republican Party, the Republicans of Woodstock Commons, Connecticut, held a large Republican rally or barbecue, as it was called, to which came thousands from the neighboring country. Many went from my native place, Southbridge, Massachusetts, a few miles across the line, and my father took us boys to this great meeting. I remember among the interesting things was a large delegation from East Woodstock, and in that procession was an immense wagon, drawn by some twenty-five pairs of oxen, and upon the wagon were young ladies, dressed in white, one to represent each State of the Union, as it then was.

An enormous crowd was upon the Common during the speeches that were made by men of national reputation. I remember when standing by my father, holding his hand, that Henry J. Raymond, the famous editor of the *New York Times*, made a speech, and that during this speech there strolled along our way, on the outskirts of the crowd, a man who came near to us, and stood by us. He was a striking-looking person, with a strong, manly face; long hair that reached to his shoulders, a remarkable eye, a high

forehead. He wore a light-colored slouch hat, and from his shoulders hung a gray shawl, such as were worn very generally instead of overcoats by men in those days. His face attracted me, young as I was, and on that day began an admiration for it, and a constant desire to look upon it, whenever in his presence, that amounted, I may say, to a fascination to me to the end of his days. My father said to me: 'That is Henry Ward Beecher,' and then we spoke with him. His kindly way won me from the first. He strolled about the edge of the crowd for awhile, and then went toward the platform, and followed Mr. Raymond. Young as I was, I was much interested to see how he entertained, interested, and instructed the audience, made up of people of all sorts—farmers, merchants, young men, young women, boys, and girls, and although I cannot recall a word that he said on that occasion, as I was too young to remember such speeches, I remember that his words influenced me then in favor of freedom, and to hate slavery, and to admire Frémont, the Pathfinder, who was the first nominee of the Republican party."

The same writer recalls an incident which Mr. Beecher told him years afterward, in connection with a speech in the Frémont campaign which he made at Rome, N. Y. "He mentioned it as one of the most entertaining and amusing of the many that occurred in his public life. He said that when speaking at Rome one evening upon the two leading candidates, and alluding to the third, the compromise candidate, he said: 'My friends, in this great campaign there are but two sides, and we must range ourselves upon one side or the other; there is no

middle ground for any of us. On the one side is Buchanan, with the black shield of slavery, and upon the other is Frémont, with the white banner of liberty, and with one or the other of these two you must take your stand; but who is this that I see crawling under the fence? Oh, that is Millard Fillmore.' Immediately a little dapper fellow in the front row jumped up, looked in under the chairs, and shouted out: 'Where is he?' A large number of the audience saw and heard it, and broke out into uproarious laughter that extended throughout the whole house, and stopped the speaking for several minutes. They laughed so that the little fellow felt so uncomfortable he got up and went out. All through the evening, every few minutes, some one would sing out in some part of the house: 'Where is he?' Then there would be a ripple of laughter that would extend throughout the hall, and the speech be interrupted, Mr. Beecher himself joining with the audience heartily."

Mr. Beecher said of this campaign: "I felt at that time that it was very likely that I should sacrifice my life, or my voice at any rate, but I was willing to lay down either, or both of them, for that cause." There probably has been no political campaign in the United States into which so much moral enthusiasm entered, and probably no Presidential campaign, unless it be those of 1840 and 1884, into which was carried so much personal enthusiasm, as was roused by the struggle to elect Frémont in 1856. It drew into its fervid discussion many of the greatest men of the critical epoch which was soon to come. Henry Wilson and John A. Andrew in Massachusetts, William

H. Seward in New York, Oliver Perry Morton in Indiana, Abraham Lincoln in Illinois, Jacob M. Howard in Michigan, the sturdy and great-minded statesman, Timothy Otis Howe, of Wisconsin, destined to a leading position in the United States Senate; James G. Blaine, of Maine, a young journalist of twenty-six, who then gained his first eminence as a public speaker; these were a few of the men whose voices rang out in the summer of 1856 against further compromise with the friends of slavery extension.

There was much in Frémont himself and in his career to inspire the young anti-slavery voters. He was a soldier, a gallant explorer; he had associated his name with Rocky Mountain adventures. Though a native of South Carolina, he had been foremost in the struggle to make California free, and to bring her into the Union; he had been one of the first Senators from that golden commonwealth of the Pacific. Whittier's lines on "The Pass of the Sierra," which told how he had led his mountain men over the frozen throne of winter down into the warm valleys and summer fields which lay to the westward, stir the blood even now, as they drew the hot tears in the August of 1856 :

"Strong leader of that mountain band,  
Another task remains,  
To break from Slavery's desert land  
A path to Freedom's plains:

The winds are wild, the way is drear,  
Yet, flashing through the night,  
Lo! icy ridge and rocky spear  
Blaze out in morning light!"

“ Rise up, FRÉMONT! and go before ;  
 The Hour must have its man ;  
 Put on the hunting-shirt once more,  
 And lead in Freedom’s van.”

One of Mr. Beecher’s most effective articles during the campaign was the story of the dog Noble and the empty hole, in which he made fun of the persistent attacks of certain pro-slavery newspapers, who tried to make capital against Frémont by falsely asserting that he was a Roman Catholic. Frémont had fallen in love with Jessie Benton, the daughter of the great Senator from Missouri, and the lovers had run away and been married by a Catholic priest. “ If we had been in Col. Frémont’s place,” wrote Mr. Beecher, “ we would have been married, if it had required us to walk through a row of priests and bishops as long as from Washington to Rome, ending up with the Pope himself.” The famous story narrated the enthusiasm of an intelligent dog, named Noble, who having seen a red squirrel running into a hole in a stone wall could not be persuaded that the squirrel was not in that hole for ever. “ When all other occupations failed, this hole remained to him. When there were no more chickens to harry, no pigs to bite, no cattle to chase, no children to romp with, no expeditions to make with the grown folks, and when he had slept all his dog-skin would hold, he would walk out of the yard, yawn and stretch himself, and then look wistfully at the hole as if thinking to himself: ‘ Well, as there is nothing else to do I may as well try that hole again!’

“ We had almost forgotten this little trait until the conduct of the *New York Express* in respect to Col.

Frémont's religion brought it ludicrously to mind again. Col. Frémont is and always has been as sound a Protestant as John Knox ever was. He was bred in the Protestant faith and has never changed. . . . But the *Express*, like Noble, has opened on this hole in the wall and can never be done barking at it. Day after day it resorts to this empty hole. When everything else fails this resource remains. There they are indefatigably, the *Express* and Noble, a Church without a Frémont, and a hole without a squirrel in it! . . . We never read the *Express* nowadays without thinking involuntarily, 'Goodness, the dog is letting off at that hole again.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

### TRUTH ON THE SCAFFOLD, WRONG ON THE THRONE.

FRÉMONT was defeated, and never rose again, except for a brief period in the war, to national prominence. James Buchanan, the tool of slavery, was placed in the White House. But the Republican party had won its first great victory. Frémont had received over a million three hundred thousand votes.

"The Republicans, far from being discouraged, felt and acted as men who had won the battle. Indeed the moral triumph was theirs, and they believed that the actual victory at the polls was only postponed. The Democrats were mortified and astounded by the large popular vote against them. The loss of New York and Ohio, the narrow escape from defeat in Pennsylvania, the rebuke of Michigan to their veteran leader, General Cass, intensified by the choice of Chandler, his successor in the Senate, the absolute consolidation of New England against them, all tended to humiliate and discourage the party. They had lost ten States which General Pierce had carried in 1852, and they had a watchful, determined foe in the field, eager for another trial of strength. The issue was made, the lines in battle were drawn. Freedom or slavery in the Territories,

all was to be fought to the end, without flinching, and without compromise."<sup>1</sup>

After the election of Buchanan, the next great, portentous event in the anti-slavery struggle was Capt. John Brown's sudden attack on Harper's Ferry, made on the 17th of October, 1858. This startling event had more momentous consequences than even the Southern or the anti-slavery leaders then clearly saw. It roused to the highest pitch the feelings and deepened the convictions on both sides of Mason and Dixon's line, and doubtless hastened the outbreak of the Civil War.

On the 30th of October, while the imprisoned John Brown was awaiting his trial, Mr. Beecher preached a notable sermon on "The Nation's Duty to Slavery," in which, while maintaining with great eloquence the principles of freedom, he manifested a spirit of kindness and forbearance toward the South which contrasted with some of the fiercer utterances of the hour. Utilizing the Harper's Ferry incident and the national excitement over it, he made some very practical and sensible observations on the present state of the country. After portraying the amazement and fear of Virginia occasioned by the falling and exploding of the burning aerolite at Harper's Ferry, after commenting on the excitement caused by the seventeen white men who attacked the great State, and held two thousand citizens in duress till the whole commonwealth was alarmed, he gave a description of the courageous fanatic who had terrified a great people, telling how Brown, the kind-hearted,

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<sup>1</sup> Blaine's "Twenty Years of Congress," Vol. I., p. 130.



industrious, peace-loving man, with a large family of children, had sought a free man's home in Kansas. "That infant colony held thousands of souls as noble as liberty ever inspired or religion enriched. A great scowling slave State, its nearest neighbor, sought to tread down this liberty-loving colony, and to dragoon slavery into it by force of arms."

"It was in this field that Brown received his impulse. A tender father, whose life was in his son's life, he saw his first-born seized like a felon, chained, driven across the country, crazed by suffering and heat, beaten like a dog by the officer in charge, and long lying at death's door! Another noble boy, without warning, without offense, unarmed, in open day, in the midst of the city, was shot dead! No justice sought out the murderers; no United States attorney was despatched in hot haste; no marines or soldiers aided the wronged and weak!

"The shot that struck the child's heart crazed the father's brain. Revolving his wrongs, and nursing his hatred of that deadly system that breathed such contempt at justice and humanity, at length his phantoms assume a slender reality, and organized such an enterprise as one might expect from a man whom grief had bereft of good judgment."<sup>1</sup>

After praising his boldness, honesty, freedom from deceit, and general manliness, Mr. Beecher said: "I deplore his misfortunes. I sympathize with his sorrows. I mourn the hiding or obscurity of his reason. I disapprove of his mad and feeble scheme. I shrink from the folly of the bloody foray, and

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 206.

I shrink likewise from all the anticipation of that judicial bloodshed, which doubtless ere long will follow—for when was cowardice ever magnanimous? . . . Let no man pray that Brown be spared; let Virginia make him a martyr. Now, he has only blundered. His soul was noble; his work miserable. But a cord and a gibbet would redeem all that and round up Brown's failure with a heroic success."<sup>1</sup>

The prophecy was more than fulfilled, though Mr. Beecher little dreamed that the giant wrong which the old man attacked would in a few years be trampled out in blood to the sublime music of the old man's name.

Mr. Beecher showed the insecurity of those States that "carried powder as their chief cargo." Without expressing at large his well-known opinions on the great evil of slavery, he wisely urged that one's views on this subject might be right and yet his views of duty toward it might be wrong. There were unjustifiable ways of attacking even slavery. As four millions of colored slaves dwelt in the midst of the population of ten millions of whites in fifteen different States, and as these States were bound up with other States in a common national life, he held that the question of duty was not simply what was duty towards blacks, and not what is duty toward the whites, but what is duty to each and to both united. "I am bound by the great law of love to consider my duties toward the slave, and I am bound by the great law of love also to consider my duties toward the white man who is his master. Both are to

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 207.

be treated with Christian wisdom and forbearance. We must seek to benefit the slave as well as the white man, and the white man as really as the slave."<sup>1</sup>

He endeavored to throw some clear light upon this very difficult problem, and no wiser or more Christian words were spoken at that time than his. He showed, in the first place, that it was not right to treat the citizens of the South with bitter acrimony because they were involved in a system of wrongdoing. "A malignant speech about slavery will not do any good; and, most of all, it will not do those any good who most excite our sympathy—the children of bondage. If we hope to ameliorate the condition of the slave, the first step must not be taken by setting the masters against them."

In the next place he taught that the breeding of discontent among the bondmen of our land was not the right way to help them. "If I were in the South, I should, not from fear of the master, but from the most deliberate sense of the injurious effects of it to the slave, never by word or act do anything to excite discontent among those who were in slavery. The condition of the slave must be changed, but the change cannot go on in one part of the community alone. There must be change in the law, change in the Church, change in the upper classes, change in the middle, and in all classes. Emancipation when it comes, will come either by revolution or by a change of public opinion in the whole community."<sup>2</sup>

In the third place he showed that no relief would be afforded to the slaves of the South as a body, by

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 209. <sup>2</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 212.

an individual or by any organized plan to carry them off, or to incite them to abscond. "The more enlightened and liberty-loving among the Southern slaves bear too much of their masters' blood not to avail themselves of any opening to escape; it is their right; it will be their practice. Free locomotion is an incident of slave-property which the master must put up with. Nimble legs are of much use in tempering the severity of slavery. If, therefore, an enslaved man, acting from the yearnings of his own heart, desires to run away, who shall forbid him? In all the earth, wherever a human being is held in bondage, he has a right to slough his burden and break his yoke if he can."

"I stand on the outside of this great cordon of darkness, and every man that escapes from it, running for his life, shall have some help from me, if he comes forth of his own free accord; yet I would never incite slaves to run away, or send any other man to do it. We have no right to carry into the midst of slavery exterior discontent; and for this reason: *that it is not good for the slaves themselves.*"<sup>1</sup>

"Four million men cannot run away, until God sends ten Egyptian plagues to help them."

In the fourth place, he would not tolerate anything like insurrection and civil war. "It is bad for the master, bad for the slave, bad for all that are neighbors to them, bad for the whole land—bad from beginning to end!"<sup>2</sup>

"According to God's Word, so long as a man remains a servant he must obey his master. The right

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 212. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 213.

of the slave to throw off the control of his master is not abrogated. The right of the subject to do this is neither defined nor limited. But the use of this right must conform to reason, and not to mere impulse. The leaders of a people have no right to whelm their helpless followers in terrible disaster by inciting them to rebel, under circumstances that afford not the slightest hope that their rebellion will rise to the dignity of a successful revolution.

"This has been the eminent wisdom of that Hungarian exile, Kossuth. In spite of all that is written and said against this noble man, I stand to my first full faith in him. The uncrowned hero is the noblest man, after all, in Europe! And his statesmanship has been shown in this: that his burning sense of the right of his people to be free has not led him to incite them to premature, partial, and easily overmatched revolt."<sup>1</sup>

"Now, if the Africans in our land were intelligent, if they understood themselves, if they had self-governing power, if they were able first to throw off the yoke of adverse laws and institutions, and afterwards defend and build themselves up into a civil state, they would have just the same right to assume their independence that any nation has. But does any man believe that this is the case?"<sup>2</sup>

Turning from these specifications as to the wrong way to deal with slavery, he expressed his mind freely as to the right way. He believed, first, in beginning at the North and emancipating the colored men near at home. "How are the free colored people treated

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 214. <sup>2</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 215.

at the North? They are almost without education, and with but little sympathy for their ignorance. They are refused the common rights of citizenship which the whites enjoy. They cannot even ride in the cars of our city railroads. They are snuffed at in the house of God, or tolerated with ill-concealed disgust. Can a black man be a mason in New York? Let him be employed as a journeyman, and every Irish lover of liberty that carried a hod or trowel would leave at once, or compel him to leave! Can the black man be a carpenter? There is scarcely a carpenter's shop in New York in which a journeyman would continue to work if a black man were employed in it. . . . We tax them, and then refuse to allow their children to go to our public schools. We heap upon them moral obloquy more atrocious than that which the master heaps upon the slave. And, notwithstanding all this, we lift ourselves up to talk to the Southern people about the rights and liberties of the human soul, and especially the African soul!"

"Every effort that is made in Brooklyn to establish schools and churches for the free colored people, and to encourage them to educate themselves, and become independent, is a step toward emancipation in the South. The degradation of free colored men in the North will fortify slavery in the South!"<sup>1</sup>

In the next place, he believed that all the springs of feeling in the free States should be quickened in behalf of human liberty. "Liberty with us must be raised by religion from the selfishness of an instinct to the sanctity of a moral principle! . . . We

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," pp. 216-217.

must inspire in the public mind a profound sense of the rights of men founded upon their relations to God. The glory of intelligence, refinement, genius, has nothing to do with men's rights. The rice slave, the Hottentot, are as much God's children as Humboldt or Chalmers."

"What can the North do for the South, unless her own heart is purified and ennobled? When the love of liberty is at so low an ebb that Churches dread the sound, ministers shrink from the topic; when book-publishers dare not publish or republish a word on the subject of slavery, cut out every living word from school books, expurgate life-passages from Humboldt, Spurgeon, and all foreign authors or teachers; and when great religious publication societies, endowed for the very purpose of speaking fearlessly the truths which interest would let perish, pervert their trusts, and are dumb, first and chiefly, and articulate only in things that thousands of others could publish as well as they—what chance is there that public sentiment in such a community will have any power with the South?"<sup>1</sup>

In the third place, he advocated, in every way consistent with fearless assertion of truth, the maintenance of sympathetic kindness toward the South. "We are brethren; and I pray that no fratricidal influences be permitted to sunder this Union. There was a time when I thought the body of death would be too much for life, and that the North was in danger of taking disease from the South, rather than they our health. That time has gone past." "I am

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 218.

for holding the heart of the North right up to the heart of the South. Every heart-beat will be, ere long, not a blow riveting oppression, but a throb carrying new health."<sup>1</sup>

In the fourth place he urged that no pains be spared, through the Christian conscience of the South, to give to the slave himself a higher moral status. "If you wish to work for the enfranchisement of the African, seek to make him a better man. Teach him to be an obedient servant, and an honest, true, Christian man. . . . To make a slave morose, fractious, disobedient, and unwilling to work is the way to defer his emancipation. We do not ask the slave to be satisfied with slavery. . . . It is the low animal condition of the African that enslaves him. It is moral enfranchisement that will break his bonds."<sup>2</sup>

In the fifth place, he proceeded to show that the things promoting emancipation were not so complicated or numerous as some people imagined. "A few virtues established, a few usages maintained, a few rights guaranteed to the slaves, and the system is vitally wounded. The right of chastity in the woman, the unblemished household love, the right of parents in their children—on these three elements stands the whole weight of society." "I stand up in behalf of two million women who are without a voice, to declare that there ought to be found in Christianity, somewhere, an influence which shall protect their right to their own persons, and that their purity shall stand

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 219-220



on some other ground than the caprice of their masters."<sup>1</sup>

"I declare that there must be a Christian public sentiment that shall make the family inviolate. Men sometimes say, 'It is rarely the case that families are separated.' It is false! It is false! There is not a slave-mart that does not bear testimony, a thousand times over, against such an assertion. Children are bred like colts and calves, and are dispersed like them." "The moment you make slaves serfs, they are no longer a legal tender, and are uncurrent in the market; and families are so cumbrous, so difficult to support, so expensive, that owners are compelled, from reasons of pecuniary interest, to discontinue the system."<sup>2</sup>

And, finally, among the means to be employed for promoting the liberty of the slave, he did not fail to include the power of true Christian prayer. Mr. John R. Howard, in his review of Mr. Beecher's personality and political influence, has said: "No Southerner to-day would be able to dissent from his doctrine as expounded in that discourse, or could help a warming of heart toward a man who, in the midst of such a tempest of popular excitement along the line of principles which he himself had done so much to inspire, could yet so temperately and considerately and Christianly stretch forth the restraining hand of wisdom."

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 220-221.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 221-222.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### BEECHER THE EMANCIPATOR.

MR. BEECHER's influence was daily enlarging at the North. The two most influential journalists of the Republican party, Horace Greeley and Henry J. Raymond, took frequent counsel with him in regard to public policy. As a practical Abolitionist he was probably the most effective man in the country.

His aid in freeing the Edmonson sisters, as early as 1848, has already been noted, but this was only one of many successful efforts to buy the liberty of his brothers and sisters in bondage. "I was always glad, at suitable times," he said to his own people, "as often as was proper, to bring before you living men and women, and let them stand and look at you in the face, that you might see what sort of creatures slaves were made of. I was glad by every means in my power to arouse men's feelings against the abomination of slavery, which I hated with an unutterable hatred."

A slave girl, named "Pink," or "Pinkie," "too fair and beautiful a child for her own good," was brought to his attention as one whom he might help to purchase and thus save from the hell of transportation to the far Southern slave-market. She was brought North and placed by him on the platform of Plymouth Church. "And the rain never fell faster than the

tears from many of you that were here. The scene was one of intense enthusiasm. The child was bought, and overbought. The collection that was taken on the spot was enough, and more than enough, to purchase her. It so happened (it is not wrong to mention now) that a lady known to literary fame as Miss Rose Terry was present; and as, like many others, she had not with her as much money as she wanted to give, she took a ring off from her hand and threw it into the contribution-box. That ring I took and put it into the child's hand, and said to her: 'Now remember, that this is your freedom-ring.' Her expression, as she stood and looked at it for a moment, was pleasing to behold; and Eastman Johnson, the artist, was so much interested in the occurrence that he determined to represent it on canvas, and he painted her looking at her freedom-ring; and I have a transcript of the picture now at my house."<sup>1</sup>

She was afterwards called Rose Ward, Rose from the name of the lady who gave the beautiful opal ring and Ward from Mr. Beecher's second name. He raised one hundred and fifty dollars to give her a year's schooling in the Lincoln University at Washington.

One of the most thrilling scenes in Plymouth Church occurred on June 1, 1856. Mr. Beecher prefaced what he was about to do and justified it by reading from the Gospels the story of what Jesus wrought on the Sabbath Day, in healing the man with the withered hand; and then he told of a young woman who was to be sold by her own father "to go South—for what

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 296.

purpose you can imagine, when you see." The slave-trader who bought her for twelve hundred dollars was moved to offer her the opportunity of purchasing her freedom, giving one hundred dollars himself and persuading two others to give a hundred dollars each. Through the kindness of free-State men in Washington she had been able to add four hundred dollars to her ransom money, and Mr. Beecher was asked to raise what remained, which he promised to do on condition that she were permitted to come North. She gave her word of honor that she would return to Richmond in case the money was not all forthcoming.

Going to the stairs that lead up to the platform, Mr. Beecher said: "Come up here, Sarah, and let us all see you." The young woman ascended the steps, and, much embarrassed, sank down into the chair. "The white blood of her father might be traced in her regular features and high, thoughtful brow, while her complexion and wavy hair betrayed her slave mother. 'And this,' said Mr. Beecher, 'is a marketable commodity. Such as she are put into one balance and silver into the other. She is now legally free, but she is bound by a moral obligation which is stronger than any law. I reverence woman. For the sake of the love I bore my mother, I hold her sacred, even in the lowest position, and will use every means in my power for her uplifting. What will you do now? May she read her liberty in your eyes?'"<sup>1</sup>

The plates were passed, and soon filled. Amid their tears the congregation had the joy of giving liberty. Mr. Lewis Tappan finally rose, and said

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 298.

that there need be no anxiety about the result of the effort, as some gentlemen had pledged themselves to make up the deficiency whatever it might be. After the announcement had been made that the act of emancipation was completed, and the involuntary applause had subsided, Mr. Beecher said: "When the old Jews went up to their solemn feast, they made the mountains round about Jerusalem ring with their shouts. I do not approve of an unholy clapping in the house of God, but when a good deed is well done, it is not wrong to give an outward expression of our joy." Then the congregation sang a hymn, perhaps as it was never sung before:

"Do not I love Thee, O, my Lord?

Behold my heart and see;

And turn the dearest idol out

That dares to rival Thee.

Hast Thou a lamb in all thy flock

I would disdain to feed?

Hast Thou a foe before whose face

I fear Thy cause to plead?"

It was found that seven hundred and eighty-three dollars had been given, so that not only the woman but her two years' old child could be redeemed.

Mr. N. D. Pratt, of Chicago, gives the following reminiscences: "In September, 1860, I first visited my brother in New York; on Sunday morning he took me to Mr. Beecher's church. I recall what is so familiar to all who attended that church; the crowds that left the ferry-boat, and went up Fulton street, so that the answer one received generally, if he asked the way to Mr. Beecher's church on Sunday morning, at any time after ten o'clock on leaving the ferry,

was, 'Follow the crowd.' I was impressed as I never was before with the power of pulpit oratory. I remember how the vast throng listened to every word—recall the atmosphere during the prayer, which always seemed different in Plymouth Church from that of any other. . . . During the days of the Civil War, there were scenes in Plymouth Church that impressed themselves upon the attendants for all time. Mr. Beecher preached patriotic sermons constantly, and if one had not been taught to love freedom before, he could only become a lover of liberty, and learn to hate the institution of slavery under such influences."

"One Sunday morning he had baptized a large number of children, twenty or more; he then took a little white child, with a beautiful face and curly hair, and went into the pulpit, and stood for a moment there; the congregation looked upon the scene with surprise and curiosity. Then he said: 'I have brought this child into the pulpit for I wished it to teach a moral lesson.' There was deathlike silence and suspense for a moment or two; then he said: 'This child was born a slave, and has just been redeemed from slavery.' He went on to relate that one of the nurses in our army had found the child in Virginia, and had sent her to Brooklyn to him; he had found a home for it in a wealthy family where she was to be cared for and educated. Dr. Lord, president of Dartmouth College, had lately written a book upon slavery as a Divine institution. Mr. Beecher said: 'When I see a drabbed woman upon Broadway, when I meet a man who has been wrecked, I feel as if I could lay down my life for them, if necessary, to

save them; but when I read a book written by a hoary-headed president of a college, intended to extol an institution that would consign a child like this to a life worse than death, I curse him, in the name of my God.' The congregation, their feelings wrought to the highest pitch, broke forth into applause, and when it had subsided, Mr. Beecher put his hand upon the child's head, and said: 'Anna, blossom of liberty, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.' There was not a dry eye in the congregation, and a lesson of freedom was taught by that scene that scores of sermons would fail to teach. The child was reared and educated in a Brooklyn family, and became a beautiful, cultivated woman, a fine singer, and an ornament to society."

Mr. Pratt also recalls the following: "Twenty years later, or more, in talking with Mr. Beecher upon the services in his church during the war, I mentioned this scene as one of the most interesting to me; he recalled it, and said that with one exception, perhaps, it was the most thrilling scene ever enacted in his church. He then read me the story of the purchase of a slave in Plymouth Church, and stated that he could never tell this story and control himself. This last remark he made upon my request that he tell the story in the lecture he was to deliver that evening at Central Music Hall, in which he was to give an account of his trip across the continent, and return through the South, including a visit to New Orleans. I will repeat it here, as Mr. Beecher told it to me, according to my best recollection of it. He stated that a female slave had escaped from her master, and

had reached Brooklyn; she had been found, and under the Fugitive Slave Law could be returned to New Orleans, her home. Mr. Beecher made inquiry as to her value, and word came to him from her owner at New Orleans, that if Henry Ward Beecher would promise that either the woman or two thousand dollars should reach New Orleans in ten days, he would be satisfied with that promise, and would let the matter take its course.

“Mr. Beecher sent back word that either the two thousand dollars or the woman should be in New Orleans by that time. He said to me that he was pleased that a slaveholder who naturally hated and distrusted him should show this confidence in him. On the following Sunday morning the woman was taken to Plymouth Church. At the close of the sermon Mr. Beecher turned to her as she sat near the pulpit and said, ‘Eliza, I wish you would come on the platform.’ She walked up and stood by his side: a beautiful woman with an intelligent face, and as she stood there she trembled like a leaf. He turned to the congregation and said: ‘This woman is a slave, and I have promised her owner at New Orleans that either she or two thousand dollars, which is her stated value, shall be in New Orleans within ten days. Is there a father here who has a daughter, is there a husband or a brother here who will say that this woman shall go back to slavery? I wish to raise the two thousand dollars in this congregation this morning.’ He had hardly spoken these words before some one said, ‘I will give one hundred dollars’; another, ‘I will give a hundred,’ and another and another, and before he put down the names they had subscribed



over half the amount so rapidly that he could not keep count, when Russell Sage rose and said : ' Mr. Beecher, I will give the balance whatever it may be.' Mr. Beecher turned to the woman and said, ' Eliza, you are a free woman.' She sank down in a chair upon the platform and wept like a child, while the whole congregation was in tears."

After John Brown's raid into Virginia the tide of events swept on rapidly toward the Civil War. In 1858 had occurred the memorable debate between Lincoln and Douglas which brought the future emancipator into national prominence, and had won the intelligent admiration of keen-sighted men, such, for example, as James Russell Lowell. In 1859 Mr. Lincoln came to New York and delivered the famous address at the Cooper Institute, wherein he showed how unbroken was the testimony of the fathers of the Republic against the extension of slavery. Mr. Beecher met Lincoln at that time. The Illinois lawyer attended the services in Plymouth Church and these two great leaders of the people dined together at the house of a friend.

The next year, 1860, Mr. Lincoln was nominated by the Republican National Convention in Chicago. Mr. Beecher might easily have been sent as a delegate-at-large from New York to that historic Convention, but, unlike Mr. Raymond, Governor Morgan, Mr. Evarts, and George William Curtis, and the whole delegation from the Empire State, he did not favor the nomination of Mr. Seward, who seemed to him to have more head than heart. Mr. Raymond, a warm friend of Beecher's, was one of the delegates to the Convention. Overlooking a despatch which one of

the representatives of the New York *Times* was making ready for that paper, Mr. Raymond drew his pen through that part of it which predicted Seward's defeat and Lincoln's nomination, and when he had changed it he said; "I would not have Henry Ward Beecher read that dispatch for a thousand dollars."

"One of the first to call upon Mr. Raymond in the *Times* office upon his return from Chicago was Mr. Beecher, then in the very prime of mental and physical strength. With a laugh that was almost a roar, he burst into the editorial-room where Mr. Raymond sat, his chair tilted upon its two forelegs, and grasping him cordially, heartily, vigorously, said: 'Young man, I know the people of this country at heart better than you do. Your friend Seward has too much head and too little heart to succeed in any such crisis as this.'

"'And yours,' replied Mr. Raymond, 'I fear, has too much heart and too little head for such a crisis as will surely be precipitated.'

"'Trust, then,' replied Mr. Beecher, 'in God, and keep your powder dry.'"<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher's labors for the success of the Republican nominee in 1856 were not more intense and vigorous than his efforts to bring about the election of Abraham Lincoln. With pen and tongue he devoted himself to popularizing liberty in the North and arousing that conscience and deepening that conviction which ultimately gave strength and success to the mighty battle for Liberty and Union so soon to be opened by the shot against Sumter.

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Henry Ward Beecher," by Joseph Howard, Jr., p. 277.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### STEERING BY THE DIVINE COMPASS.

THE Republican party were successful. "For the first time," as Wendell Phillips said, "the slave had elected a President." The crisis hastened on. One State after another in the South, by the act of State conventions, voted itself out of the Union. Cabinet officers and Congressmen left Washington, and aided in organizing the Confederate government. All that the fathers had built, the work of Washington, and the consummate sagacity of Alexander Hamilton, seemed falling into ruin. The compromises which Henry Clay and Daniel Webster had championed, were bulrushes, torn away by the fierce Niagara of secession sentiment and purpose. The right to coerce a rebelling State was denied even by influential journals at the North, and base and futile compromises were freely advocated by those who felt that peace and Union were more precious than any surrender of principle, however, infamous and cowardly.

Mr. Beecher's great Thanksgiving sermon for this year was a far-sounding trumpet-blast against any compromising of principle. Choosing for his text the words with which Jesus began His public ministry—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor,"

he declared that national prosperity is a snare if the people are ignorant, the poor are cast down and oppression is triumphant. After giving thanks for the national mercies of the year, he said that all the sons of God rejoice and all good men rejoice. "The Mayor of New York, in a public proclamation, in view of this prodigal year, that has heaped the poor man's house with abundance, is pleased to say that there is no occasion apparent to him for thanksgiving. We can ask no more. When bad men grieve at the state of public affairs, good men should rejoice. When infamous men keep fast, righteous men should have thanksgiving. God reigns, and the devil trembles. Amen. Let us rejoice!"<sup>1</sup>

After glancing at such reasons for thanksgiving as the increasing influence of liberty-loving nations in the world, the emergence of the common people into power, the resurrection of Italy, the growing moderation of the Russian monarchy, the increasing vigor of Christian nations, and the reassertion of the principles of justice and liberty in America, he said: "The tree of Life, whose leaves were for the healing of the nations, has been evilly dealt with. Its boughs have been lopped, and its roots starved till the fruit is knurly. Upon its top had been set scions of bitter fruits, that grew and sucked out all the sap from the better branches. Upon its trunk the wild boar of the forest had whetted his tusks.

"But now again it blooms. Its roots have found the river, and shall not want again for moisture; the grafts of poisonous fruits have been broken off or

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 226.

have been blown out; mighty spearmen have hunted the wild swine back to his thickets, and the hedge shall be broken down no more round about it. The air is fragrant in its opening buds, the young fruit is setting. God has returned and looked upon it, and behold, summer is in all its branches!"<sup>1</sup>

But the preacher saw a threatening and terrible background to this beautiful picture of the tree of liberty re-budded and full of promising fruit. "The clouds lie lurid along the Southern horizon. The Caribbean Sea, that breeds tornadoes and whirlwinds, has heaped up treasures of storms portentous that seem about to break. Let them break! God has appointed their bounds."

There was no safety for the nation except in clinging to the great universal principles of truth and duty. "Vainglory will destroy us. Pride will wreck us. Above all, the fear of doing right will be fatal. But Justice and Liberty are pilots that do not lose their craft. They steer by a Divine compass. They know the hand that holds the winds and the storms. It is always safe to be right; and our business is not so much to seek peace as to seek the causes of peace."<sup>2</sup>

The nation's prosperity had its beginning and continuance in natural laws, and no true prosperity was assured if the people set their faces against Divine principle. "While papers and parties are in full outcry, and nostrums are advertised, and scared politicians are at their wits' end (without having gone far, either), and men of weak minds are beside themselves, and imbeciles stand doubting in the streets, know ye

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 228. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 229.

that the way of peace is simple, accessible, and easy. Be still. Stand firm! Have courage to wait. Money is insane. Fear is death. Faith in justice and in rectitude, and trust in God will work out safety."

"Thirty pieces of silver bought Christ, and hung Judas. If you sell your convictions to fear, you give yourself to a vagabond. If you sell your conscience to Interest, you traffic with a fiend. The fear of doing right is the grand treason in times of danger. When you consent to give up your convictions of justice, humanity, and liberty, for the sake of tranquility, you are like men who buy a treacherous truce of tyrants by giving up their weapons of war. Cowards are the food of despots.

"When a storm is on the deep, and the ship labors, men throw over the deck-load, they cast forth the heavy freights, and ride easier as their merchandise grows less. But in our time men propose to throw overboard the compass, the charts, the chronometer and sextant, but to keep the freight!"<sup>1</sup>

In this memorable discourse, Mr. Beecher, as so often, argued convincingly by means of illustration. He urged the folly of being fearful of excitement, for he believed that amongst Christians, civilized people, excitement works upward and toward peace. "The rush of life, the vigor of earnest men, the conflict of realities, invigorate, cleanse, and establish truth. Our only fear should be lest we refuse God's work. He has appointed this people, and our day, for one of those world-battles on which ages turn. Ours is a pivotal period. The strife is between a dead past

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," pp. 230-231.

and a living future; between a wasting evil and a nourishing good; between *Barbarism* and *Civilization*."<sup>1</sup>

The North and South must each reap from the seed they have sown. "It is this that convulses the South. They wish to reap fruits of liberty from the seed of slavery. They wish to have an institution which sets at naught the laws of God, and yet be as refined and prosperous and happy as we are, who obey these laws; and since they cannot, they demand that we shall make up to them what they lack." "The Southern States, then, have organized society around a rotten core—slavery; the North has organized society about a vital heart—liberty. At length both stand mature." "The time is come in which they are so brought into contact that the principle of the one or the principle of the other must yield. Liberty must discrown her fair head; she must lay her opal crown and her diamond scepter upon the altar of Oppression; or else Oppression must shrink, and veil its head and depart. Which shall it be?" "The distinctive idea of the free States is Christian civilization, and the peculiar institutions of civilization. The distinctive idea of the South is barbaric institutions. In the North mind, and in the South force, rules."<sup>2</sup>

Only three courses were possible, either to go over to the South, or to compromise principles, or to maintain principles upon just and constitutional grounds and abide the issue. The first course was both infamous and impossible. The North would not change

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 233-234.

its convictions, and, for the sake of peace, efface the distinctive features of Liberty from its statute-book. As to compromising principles, that was going over to the South in a meaner way. "We are told that Satan appears under two forms: that when he has a good, fair field, he is out like a lion, roaring and seeking whom he may devour; but that when he can do nothing more in that way he is a serpent, and sneaks in the grass. And so, it is Slavery open, bold, roaring, aggressive, or it is Slavery sneaking in the grass, and calling itself compromise. It is the same devil under either name."<sup>1</sup>

He believed in a compromise which meant simply forbearance, kindness, a concession in things and not in principles, "only that is not compromise, interpreted by the facts of our past history." Mr. Beecher showed that the North wished the South no harm, but rather every prosperity; that it was willing to give the South all that, by the most liberal construction, was put into the original bond. "The Constitution gives them liberty to retake their fugitive slaves wherever they can find them. Very well. Let them. But when the *Congress* goes beyond the Constitution, and demands, on penalty, that citizens of free States shall help and render back the flying slave, we give a blunt and unequivocal refusal. We are determined to break any law that commands us to enslave or re-enslave a man, and we are willing to take the penalty. But that was not in the original bond. That is a parasitic egg, laid in the Constitution by corrupt legislation or by construction." "No political hand

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 235.



shall rob the South. We will defend her coast; we will guard her inland border from all vexations from without; and in good faith, in earnest friendship, in fealty to the Constitution, and in fellowship with the States, we will, and with growing earnestness to the end, fulfill every just duty, every honorable agreement, and every generous act within the limits of truth and honor; all that and no more,—*no more*, though the heavens fall,—*no more*, if States unclasp their hands,—*no more*, if they raise up violence against us, **NO MORE!**"<sup>1</sup>

He showed that the secret intentions of the Southern leaders could not be met by any compromise. "What do those men that are really at the bottom of this conspiracy mean? Nothing more nor less than this: Southern empire for slavery, and the reopening of the slave-trade as a means by which it be fed. Free commerce and enslaved work is their motto. They will not yet say it aloud. But this is the whispered secret of men in Carolina, and men outside of Carolina. Their secret purpose is to sweep westward like night, and involve in the cloud of their darkness all Central America, and then make Africa empty into Central America, thus changing the moral geography of the globe."

"They mean slavery. They mean an Empire of Slavery. They don't any longer talk of the *evil* of slavery. It is a virtue, a religion! It is justice and divine economy! Slaves are missionaries. Slave-ships bring heathen to plantation-Christianity. They imagine unobstructed greatness when servile hands

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 237.

shall whiten the plains from the Atlantic to the Pacific with cotton. Carolina despises compromise." <sup>1</sup>

"And do you think, poor, simple, peeping sparrow, that you can build your poor moss and hair nest of compromise on the face of the perpendicular cliff, that towers a thousand feet high, with the blackness of storms sweeping around its top, and the thunder of a turbulent ocean breaking upon its base—and God, more terrible than either, high above them, meaning Justice and Retribution!" <sup>2</sup>

He showed that moral apostasy was the only basis on which a compromise satisfactory to the South could be built, a compromise that would shut the mouth of free speech, cure the intolerance of the plantation, and make evil as profitable as good! With magnificent eloquence he pointed out how impossible it was to prevent the departure of the children of oppression from their house of bondage. There was too much light in the North to keep all men in slavery. Men would take their lives in their hands and risk everything for liberty. "It is of no use to tell the South that it shall not be so. It is of no use to whisper to them and say, 'Your troubles shall cease; we will fix this matter to your satisfaction.' God never made brick or trowel by which to patch up that door of deliverance. By night and by day slaves will flee away and escape."

"I would die myself, cheerfully and easily, before a man should be taken out of my hands when I had the power to give him liberty, and the hound was after him for his blood. I would stand as an altar of

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 237. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses" p. 238.

expiation between slavery and liberty, knowing that through my example a million men would live."<sup>1</sup>

"I see that my words are being reported, and as free speech may get into Charleston, some men there may see what I say, and let me say this to my Southern brethren: We mean to observe the Constitution, and keep every compact into which we have entered. There are men who would deceive you. They are your enemies and ours alike. They would tell lies to you, but we will not stand up and indorse them. I tell you as long as there are these free States; as long as there are hills in which men can hide, and valleys through which they can travel; as long as there is blood in the veins, and humanity in the heart, so long the fugitive will not want for sympathy and help to escape."<sup>2</sup>

He showed from the history of compromises how utterly futile they had been in this prolonged and painful controversy between the forces of freedom and slavery, and the only result had been "growing demands, growing impudence, growing wickedness, and increasing dissatisfaction, until at last excitements that used to come once in twenty years began to come at every ten, and now once in four years, and you cannot elect a President strictly according to constitutional method without having this Nation imperiled, banks shaken, stores overturned, panics created, and citizens terrified. You have come to that state in which the whole Nation is turmoiled and agitated, and driven hither and thither on account of the evil effects of compromise."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 239.   <sup>2</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 241.

He showed that compromise was a desperate shift of cowardice, begotten in deceit and ending in anger. "Compromises bury troubles, but cannot keep down their ghosts. They rise, and walk, and haunt, and gibber. We must bury our evils without resurrection. Let come what will,—secession, disunion, revolted States, and a ragamuffin empire of bankrupt States, confederated in the name of liberty for oppression or whatever other monstrosity malignant fortune may have in store,—nothing can be worse than this endless recurring threat and fear—this arrogant dragging of the South—this mercantile cringing in the North."

"Shall every quadrennial election take place in the full fury of Southern threats? Is the plantation-whip to control our ballot-boxes? Shall Northern sentiment express itself by constitutional means, at the peril of punishment? Must panic follow election? And bankruptcy follow every expression of liberty?" "The North must accept its own principles, and take the consequences. Manliness demands this—Honor demands it. But if we will not heed worthier motives, then Interest demands it. If even this is not strong enough for commercial pusillanimity, then Necessity, inevitable and irresistible, will drive and scourge us to it!"<sup>1</sup>

"Let every good man arouse, and speak the truth for liberty. Let us have an invincible courage for liberty. Let us have moderation in passions, zeal in moral sentiments, a spirit of conciliation and concession in mere material interests, but unmovable firm-

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 244.

ness for principles; and—foremost of all political principles—for Liberty!"<sup>1</sup>

What upheld and inspired Mr. Beecher during the terrible and unparalleled crisis of the winter of 1860-1861, was a strong, unfaltering faith in God, an undoubting confidence that the Union was "not going to be broken and shivered like a crystal vase that can never be put together again," because he realized the presence of God in the National life, because he felt that America embodied in her ideal the principles of the Christian Gospel. Without expecting any satisfactory results from compromise, or from the careful explanations which Mr. Lincoln made to the South, he did expect that the Nation's institutions, even though it might be through concussions, and garments rolled in blood, would be settled on right and permanent foundations.

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 245.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BEFORE THE GREAT STORM.

THE winter preceding the war was the period during which the best life of the great American Republic touched in places its lowest ebb. President Buchanan argued before the Congress which convened in December that the National Government possessed no power to coerce a State. The North was prolific of compromises, some of them unspeakably base, offered to the South. Mr. Charles Francis Adams, one of the founders of the Republican party, and one who gained just celebrity as the Minister of the United States at the Court of St. James during the war, even proposed that the National Constitution be so changed that there should be no subsequent amendment made to it, which had for its object any interference with slavery, unless such amendment originated with a slave State, and secured the assent of every State in the Union! It seems to-day utterly incredible that one of the founders of the party whose purpose was to resist the aggressions of slavery, should offer, in the teeth of Southern threats, to bind liberty with indissoluble bands, and fling her helpless at the feet of her age-long and cruel foe! "No Southern man, during the long agitation of the slavery question extending from

1820 to 1860, had ever submitted so extreme a proposition as that of Mr. Adams."<sup>1</sup>

Wendell Phillips, standing like a prophet before the Boston mobs of that winter, and arguing for disunion, was an infinitely nobler spectacle than Northern politicians offering to sell conscience, humanity, and justice in order to keep Treason from striking the blow which was to launch her slave empire!

President Buchanan issued a proclamation, appointing January 4, 1861, as a day for fasting and prayer. That fast marks, it has been well said, "the lowest point of degradation the Government of the United States ever reached." The sermon which Mr. Beecher uttered on that day is one of the most striking and stirring pulpit addresses of the century. It deserves to take rank with the greatest sermons of all time, from the vigor of its thought, the comprehensiveness of its perception of the Nation's blameworthiness, the moral sublimity of its tone and its magnificent denunciation of the cowardice that was plunging the Republic into ruin.

He pictured the Nation rolling helplessly in a great tempest, and the crew, who had brought the ship into danger by pusillanimity and treachery, calling on God for deliverance. He showed that the authorities who had appointed the fast had given sufficient reasons by their own deeds for observing it. Even to-day Mr. Beecher's words make the reader fairly feel the darkness and swirling tornado, thick with thunderbolts of war, sweeping from the treacherous Caribbean Sea, to overwhelm the Government in dis-

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<sup>1</sup> Blaine's "Twenty Years of Congress," p. 260.

aster, and irremediable destruction. He makes the blood hot, even now, to recall that the Government was in peril because Liberty had grown strong, that the wildest fanaticism was rampant in the South, turning cities into camps, threatening civil war, and hideous murder and revenges, perpetrating gigantic dishonesties, because the South had lost control of the National Government, and had determined on independence and slave empire, even if the continent had to be swept, and desolated by the furies of civil strife.

With solemn earnestness Mr. Beecher called upon the people to confess their real sins, to turn from all passions, from all thoughts and feelings which could not bear the searching inquest of God's awful Judgment Day, to take solemn account of the vice and crime, the perversion of justice, and the great public wickedness, the luxury, extravagance, ostentation, and corruption of morals for which Northern cities were as guilty before God as were the Southern States for the gigantic evils of slavery. No Hebrew prophet ever flamed with more heat and splendor against the horrible wantonness of wide-spread avarice and all the bad uses of money, and against all the corruptions which, like sea-worms, ocean-bred and swarming innumera- bly, were piercing and destroying the stout Ship of State.

With no disposition to spare the North, he portrayed the national blameworthiness toward the Indian, on whom every crime in the calendar of wrong had been committed; the wickedness of a Christian Nation swindling, chastising, wasting, destroying a heathen people, was never made more



odious. But when he came to the sin of slavery, the most alarming and portentous of all our sins, when he portrayed the oppugnant elements of Puritan liberty and Roman servitude which, for two hundred and forty years had grappled in America, when he showed that the Constitution had nourished on its bosom warring and irreconcilable sins, he spoke with an eloquence perhaps never since equaled, an eloquence which was just and discriminating, lashing the North that loved money more than God and justice, the North which, cradled in intelligence and liberty, had become confederated with slavery until the whole body politic was pervaded with this deadly injustice.

He declared how the North had participated, not only in the beginnings but in the subsequent spread of oppression; how the public sentiment which, when the Constitution was adopted, was favorable to liberty, had been allowed to subside into an acquiescence with the purposes of slavery, and that, summoned before the judgment bar of God, the North was guilty of having betrayed her stewardship. With all the moral power of her pulpit, of her schools and colleges, in seventy-five years she had permitted liberty to be discrowned and dishonored; the moral delinquency had reached the Puritan blood, which seemed to him blood touched by the blood of Christ. An unparalleled guilt, an astounding sin must be laid to the account of the North for the progress and peril of slavery. "If this confederacy shall be broken up, if the Gulf States shall demand a division of the country, and the intermediate States shall go off and two empires shall be established, no steward that has

lived since God's sun shone on the earth will have such an account to render of an estate taken under such favorable auspices, as the North will have to render of this great national estate which was committed to her trust. It is an astounding sin! It is an unparalleled guilt! The vengeance and zeal of our hearts towards the South might be somewhat tempered by the reflection that we have been so faithless and so wicked."<sup>1</sup>

It will be hard to find elsewhere any scathing of a recreant and apostate pulpit more terribly just than that which flames in this powerful discourse. A pulpit teaching the most heathen notions of liberty, so perverting popular sentiment that George Washington, if living now, would not be able to live one day in Charleston and utter the opinions he used to express; so corrupting the land that the Chief Magistrate declared that the authors of all the trouble were the men who held the doctrines of the Nation's fathers in regard to human rights; a pulpit which turned the Bible into a covered passage through which all the fiends of hell walked in to do mischief upon earth; which made the Word of God, as interpreted by a besotted priesthood, a bulwark of oppression, and hence a strong argument for infidelity; such a pulpit was not in spiritual concord and alliance with Him who came to earth to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Mr. Beecher, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes wisely said, knew how best to employ his egoisms, his own

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 260

personality in his speaking, and in this mighty outpouring of his head and heart he made a public confession of his own sin. He had been indolent, he had not been duly active in opposition to slavery; he mourned his lack of zeal, and confessed his share of responsibility in the Nation's sin, and he offered his prayer of sincere contrition and penitence that he had not been more faithful to liberty and religion.

He believed that the Nation must be tested and tried, and if, with holy martyrs and brave confessors, they bore true witness for Christ, God would yet appear as the leader and captain of their salvation; and he closed his magnificent sermon with the prayer that the God who loves to forgive and forget might hear their cries, pardon the past, inspire the future, and bring the Nation to its latter-day glory.

The terrible winter of 1861 ended, but the opening of the springtime was a period of storms, with little promise of a peaceful and fruitful summer in the Nation's life. The seeds which men had planted were seeds of fire.

“ But some day the live coal behind the thought,  
Whether from Baäl's stone obscene,  
Or from the shrine serene,  
Of God's pure altar brought,  
Bursts up in flame ; the war of tongue and pen  
Learns with what deadly purpose it was fraught  
And, helpless in the fiery passion caught,  
Shakes all the pillared state with shock of men.”

The cannon-shot was fired against Fort Sumter.  
“ On Sunday morning, the 14th of April, it was

known that Sumter had surrendered. The scales fell from men's eyes!

**THERE WAS WAR!**

The flag of the Nation had been pierced by men who had been taught their fatal skill under its protection! The Nation's pride, its love, its honor suffered with that flag, and with it trailed in humiliation!

Without concert, or counsel, the whole people rose suddenly with one indignation to vindicate the Nation's honor. It came as the night comes, or the morning—broad as a hemisphere. It rose as the tides raise the whole ocean, along the whole continent, drawn upward by the whole heavens!

“The frivolous became solemn; the wild grew stern, the young felt an instant manhood.

“It was the strangest Sunday that ever dawned on Norwood since the Colonial days when, by reason of hostile Indians, the fathers repaired to church with their muskets!”<sup>1</sup>

Again, in writing of this uprising in his story of village life in New England, Mr. Beecher said: “Our noblest sentiments, when assailed, never deliberate. A wise man foresees in advance his honor, love, purity, patriotism, with reason. When touched with harm, they burst forth into action as instantaneously as powder touched with fire into flame! When the flag was abased the Nation shuddered. No one had suspected how deep in the heart of the people was the sentiment of patriotism. For two generations men had been buying and selling, making and distributing, until the dust and shavings of the manu-

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<sup>1</sup> “Norwood,” p. 402.

factory seemed to have covered down all heroic sentiments. Long peace and exceeding prosperity had shaped popular politics into a greedy game of policy; and great principles, no longer debated or tolerated, sat in the Capitol, like decrepit old men, crooning of the golden days of old.

“The lowering of the Nation’s flag before the guns of South Carolina, pierced the pride and honor of the North to the quick. The outburst was universal and unpremeditated.”<sup>1</sup>

When the bombardment of Fort Sumter occurred, Mr. Beecher was under engagement to lecture in Cincinnati. The lecture committee, however, protested that it was not safe for him to deliver his address. Mr. Beecher declared, however, that he should speak what he had come to say, either indoors or out-doors. But the people fearing a riot came in but small numbers. He who was to be the voice of the Republic at the court of humanity, and especially before the Empire of Great Britain, hurried back to Brooklyn. His oldest son had already enlisted and returned to his home. Mrs. Beecher forbade him leaving the house before Mr. Beecher’s return. The young man was extremely anxious as to what his father would say of his conduct. His first question was: “Father, may I enlist?” and the swift answer came, “If you don’t, I’ll disown you.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Norwood,” pp. 407-408.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A GREAT LEADER IN A GREAT CRISIS.

IN the momentous struggle which for four years shook and desolated the land, Mr. Beecher was undoubtedly one of the most potent factors in keeping the North firm and resolute. During the closely contested struggle in the State of New York his great influence had contributed greatly to the election of Lincoln. Mr. Frederick Hudson, the able journalist, has said of him: "It is probable that there is not another man in the United States who is as much heard and read as Henry Ward Beecher, unless the other man be Wendell Phillips. These two preachers, publicists, and journalists are emphatically the greatest men of their kind in the country. . . . Every journal at the North throws open its columns to them. . . . Where James Gordon Bennett has half a million readers for one of his articles, Wendell Phillips has one or two millions. While Phillips indulges in politics, Beecher is equally successful with his religious notions. . . . Are not these two men, therefore, the two great editors of the United States?"<sup>1</sup>

Communication with regard to Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet was opened between Mr. Beecher and the Presi-

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<sup>1</sup> Howard's "Life of Beecher," pp. 279-280.

dent. But the great Plymouth pastor's real genius and wisdom were rarely conspicuous in his judgment of men, while as a popular advocate of great principles and policies he was unsurpassed. It would be difficult to find any contemporary record of the war that reproduces so vividly the moral agitation, the fervent and tumultuous popular feeling, as do Mr. Beecher's great sermons, *The Battle set in Array*, *The National Flag*, *The Camp, its Dangers and Duties*, *God in National Affairs*, *The Success of American Democracy*, *National Injustice and Penalty*, *The Grounds and Form of Government*, *Liberty under Laws*.

In his wonderful *Star* papers published in *The Independent*, of which he became the editor in December, 1861, we gain a new appreciation of his wisdom as a moral leader and his greatness as a Christian prophet in the greatest national crisis of our history. We feel again the thrill of those momentous times. His words throb with the mighty pulse of the great-hearted patriot, and they touch our noblest sensibilities today. They are filled with an enthusiasm of faith, with an abundance of moral courage and are fairly ablaze with divine hopefulness.

In the sermon preached April 14, 1861, during the siege of Sumter, which had an immense circulation, and was read by some preachers from their pulpits as the best words for the hour, is one of the noblest examples of Mr. Beecher's eloquence. He showed how God had raised up great leaders at different exigencies to bring forth His people. Their courage came from moral principle. Moses, Luther, the heroes of Dutch independence, and of the Puritan struggle,

were men who had heard God's voice, saying "Go forward." They were willing to venture everything, endure everything, rather than yield the precious truths of which they were the guardians. "Right before us lies the Red Sea of War. It is red indeed. There is blood in it. We have come to the very edge of it, and the Word of God to us to-day is: 'Speak unto this people that they go forward!'"

After showing that the Federal Government was created for justice and liberty, and that from unforeseen causes slavery had swelled to unexpected power, and that for the last twenty-five years there had been a growing constitutional opposition to oppression, he said: "For twenty years of defeat, though of growing influence, we have argued the questions of human rights and human liberty, and the doctrines of the Constitution and of our fathers, and we have maintained that the children should stand where their fathers did. At last the continent has consented. We began as a handful, in the midst of mobs and derision and obloquy. We have gone through the experience of Gethsemane and Calvary. The cause of Christ among His poor has suffered as the Master suffered, again and again and again; and at last the public sentiment at the North has been revolutionized."<sup>1</sup>

He believed that the vast majority of the Nation were now on the side of American institutions. The rebelling States had disowned their country and made war upon it. "There has been a spirit of patriotism in the North, but never, within my memory, in the

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 275.



South. I never heard a man from the South speak of himself as an American. Men from the South always speak of themselves as Southerners."<sup>1</sup>

What a change has come over our national life since then. It is the testimony of a distinguished minister at the Court of St. James of recent years, that Americans traveling abroad, whether they come from Maine or Texas, from Massachusetts or Florida, speak of themselves as Americans, and not primarily as citizens of their particular State.

"For the first time in the history of this Nation," said Mr. Beecher, "there is a deliberate and extensive preparation for war, and this country has received the deadly thrust of bullet and bayonet from the hands of her own children." "I hold it is ten thousand times better to have war than to have slavery. I hold that to be corrupted silently by giving up manhood, by degenerating, by becoming cravens, by yielding one right after another, is infinitely worse than war." "Eighty years of unexampled prosperity have gone far toward making us a people that judge of moral questions by their relation to our convenience and ease." "If it please God to wrap this Nation in war, one result will follow: We shall be called to suffer for our faith."<sup>2</sup>

He believed that war for nationality and liberty, leading the North to suffer for its faith, would lift the national life to a holier level. The Nation might retreat from impending strife and secure temporary peace by submitting to the dictation of a minority,

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 277-278.

by legalizing the right of any discontented fragment to rebel and set up its own authority, or by rewriting the Constitution according to the principles of Alexander Stephens, expurgating liberty and enthroning slavery. "Take that glorious, flaming sentence in the Declaration of Independence, which asserts the right of every man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and which pronounces that right to be alike inalienable to all,—take that and strike it out and put in its place this infernal article of the new Constitution of the Southern States, and you can have peace—for a little while." "The Southern Churches are all sound on the question of the Bible, and infidel on the question of its contents! They believe that this is God's Book; they believe that this book is the world's charter, and they believe it teaches the religion of servitude."<sup>1</sup>

Purchasing peace by entering into a partnership with slavery and the principles of slavery and by criminal silence was not at all to Mr. Beecher's mind. "Are you prepared to take peace upon these conditions? . . . Give me war redder than blood and fiercer than fire, if this terrible affliction is necessary, that I may maintain my faith in God, in human liberty, my faith of the fathers in the instruments of liberty, my faith in this land as the appointed abode and chosen refuge of liberty for all the earth!"<sup>2</sup>

He believed, however, that the time had come to cleanse, deepen, and strengthen the just principles of the North, to draw lines and choose sides and make sharp distinctions between shufflers and brave men.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 280. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 283.

"Thousands, thank God, of great men have spoken to us, but I think that the war-voice of Sumter has done more to bring men together, and to produce unity of feeling among them on this subject than the most eloquent-tongued orator." It was not a time to stop and measure costs, to take counsel of the till, and the safe, and the bank. That time was past. The infatuated men of the South would not have peace, "They are in arms. They have fired upon the American flag! That glorious banner has been borne through every climate, all over the globe, and for fifty years not a land nor people has been found to scorn it or dishonor it. At home, among the degenerate people of our own land, among Southern citizens, for the first time, has this glorious National flag been abased, and trampled to the ground! It is for our sons reverently to lift it, and to bear it full high again to victory and National supremacy."<sup>1</sup>

The peace to be aimed at must be built upon immutable foundations. He urged that the Northern feeling should not be vengeful or savage, that a truly Christian spirit, such as was maintained by our fathers in the Revolutionary struggle, should animate a great people in this war of tremendous conflicts. In the sublimely eloquent closing words of this great discourse we hear the voice of Milton and the voice of Chatham, and the voice of the fathers of the American Republic. "Let not your children, as they carry you to your burial be ashamed to write upon your tombstones the truth of your history. Let every man that lives and owns himself an American, take the

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 285.

side of true American principles; liberty for one, and liberty for all; liberty now, and liberty for ever; liberty as the foundation of government, and liberty as the basis of union; liberty as against revolution, liberty against anarchy, and liberty against slavery; liberty here and liberty everywhere, the world through!

“When the trumpet of God has sounded, and that grand procession is forming; as Italy has risen, and is wheeling into the ranks; as Hungary, though mute, is beginning to beat time, and make ready for the march; as Poland, having long slept, has dreamt of liberty again, and is waking; as the thirty million serfs are hearing the roll of the drum, and are going forward toward citizenship, let it not be your miserable fate, nor mine, to live in a Nation that shall be seen reeling and staggering and wallowing in the orgies of despotism! We, too, have a right to march in this grand procession of liberty. By the memory of the fathers; by the suffering of the Puritan ancestry; by the teaching of our national history; by our faith and hope of religion; by every line of the Declaration of Independence, and every article of our Constitution; by what we are and what our progenitors were,—we have a right to walk foremost in this grand procession of nations toward the bright future.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 288.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### TOILING FOR LIBERTY AND THE UNION.

**F**ew men in the North labored so incessantly and ardently to maintain the Union cause, to strengthen the military forces of the National Administration and to induce the President to adopt a radical anti-slavery policy as Mr. Beecher. Perhaps there was no wiser guiding spirit in the Nation than the great-hearted pastor of Plymouth Church, though others may justly claim to have exercised a more constant and undeviating faith in Mr. Lincoln's wisdom and sufficiency for the national crisis.

Mr. Beecher seemed two different men, the one all enthusiasm and earnest conviction, intensely devoted to the success of great principles; the other all tenderness toward individual sinners. In the fierce excitement following the death of Col. Ellsworth he said: "When I look at the South, other feelings besides those of vengeance are excited within me. Every one of those traitors is as wicked as you think, and more. The Floyds, the Davises, the Toombses, the Rhetts, and all such as they, are more wicked than we know; and yet the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour held up for every such one. They are all immortal, they are all, like myself, pilgrims toward the bourne of the

eternal. And when I think how many ignorant creatures are led by those base men to do wicked things, half of the wickedness of which they do not know, I feel compassion for them and am sorry for them."

After describing the turbulent and swelling tide of his indignant feeling, when he heard of Col. Ellsworth's death, he was almost frightened at his emotions. "And I said: 'Suppose my Master should come and say: My child, what are you doing with such feelings? Where is My teaching? What are you taking on yourself My supreme attribute for? Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' Is it not charming how these texts will exorcise the Devil? I put that passage on my head as a crown and I have felt as peaceful as a lamb ever since."

"Now, my brethren, I am going to fight this battle right straight through from beginning to end, and not lose my Christian feelings either. I am going to stick close to my Saviour."<sup>1</sup>

Earnestly sharing in the patriotic ardor which burned in the North after the firing on Fort Sumter, he toiled to make as efficient as possible the forces which were to crush the Rebellion. Speaking and writing continually, attending military drills, sending two of his sons into the field, equipping them with horses and arms, preaching in camp, comforting the afflicted whose sons had fallen in the fight, turning his own home into a store-house for military goods and his church into a rendezvous for the soldiers who were hastening to the long battle-line which

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 312-313.

stretched from Fortress Monroe to the Mississippi, directing his wife to use his entire salary, beyond the necessary household expenditures, in aiding the patriotic women of Plymouth Church who were providing for the boys at the front, and at last not only fitting out two regiments, but undertaking the task of the equipment of another, the Long Island Volunteers, he radiantly proved his faith by his patriotic work and made himself equal to a successful commander on the field in the reinforcement which he brought to the National cause.

He had given his loving confidence to a personal Saviour and was delivered from trembling anxiety in regard to his own flesh and blood, exposed to the dangers of the battle. Good humored, as full of cheer and spiritual life as ever, he imparted of his own high and wholesome spirit to a great multitude in the North who were his brethren in thinking alike concerning the Republic.

On the day that Plymouth Church contributed three thousand dollars to aid in equipping the Brooklyn Fourteenth, he preached one of the most inspiring of all his sermons, on "The National Flag." Two companies of that regiment were among his hearers. No better literature for patriotic school-books can be found than some parts of this glowing sermon.

"This Nation has a banner, too; and until recently wherever it streamed abroad men saw daybreak bursting on their eyes. For until lately the American flag has been a symbol of Liberty, and men rejoiced in it. Not another flag on the globe had such an errand, or went forth upon the sea, carrying every-

where, the world around, such hope to the captive and such glorious tidings. The stars upon it were to the pining nations like the bright morning stars above, and the stripes upon it were beams of morning light. As at early dawn the stars shine forth even while it grows light, and then as the sun advances that light breaks into banks and streaming lines of color, the glowing red and intense white striving together and ribbing the horizon with bars effulgent, so, on the American flag, stars and beams of many-colored light shine out together. And wherever this flag comes, and men behold it, they see in its sacred emblazonry no ramping lion, and no fierce eagle; no embattled castles, or insignia of imperial authority; they see the symbols of light. It's the banner of Dawn. It means *Liberty*.

"If one, then, asks me the meaning of our flag, I say to him, it means just what Concord and Lexington meant, what Bunker Hill meant; it means the whole glorious Revolutionary War, which was, in short, the rising up of a valiant young people against an old tyranny, to establish the most momentous doctrine that the world had ever known, or has since known, —the right of men to their own selves and to their liberties."

"God Almighty be thanked! that, when base and degenerate Southern men desired to set up a nefarious oppression, at war with every legend and every instinct of old American history, they could not do it under our bright flag! Its stars smote them with light like arrows shot from the bow of God. They must have another flag for such work; and they forged an infamous flag to do an infamous work, and, God be



blessed! left our bright and starry banner untainted and untouched by disfigurement and disgrace! I thank them that they took another flag to do the Devil's work, and left our flag to do the work of God!"

"Advanced full against the morning light, and borne with the growing and glowing day, it shall take the last ruddy beams of the night, and from the Atlantic wave, clear across with eagle flight to the Pacific, that banner shall float, meaning all the liberty which it has ever meant! From the North, where snows and mountain ice stand solitary, clear to the glowing tropics and the Gulf, that banner that has hitherto waved shall wave and wave for ever,—every star, every band, every thread and fold, significant of Liberty!"<sup>1</sup>

A sermon preached in May, 1861, on "The Camp, Its Dangers and Duties," is so wise, comprehensive, and pertinent to soldier life, that it might well be preached before every military encampment to-day, as a preventive of barbarism, an antiseptic to corruption, an inspiration to patriotism and morality. Mr. Beecher's serene faith in the triumph of the good old cause found expression in these words: "I have not the least doubt as to where victory will issue; I have not the least doubt as to which side will triumph. I foresee the victory. I rejoice in it, in anticipation; not because it is to be on our side, but because it has pleased God; in His infinite mercy, to make Liberty our side; not because we are North, and they are South, but because we have civilization, and they have barbarism; because we stand on the principle of

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," pp. 290-293.

equity and liberty, and they stand on the principle of slavery and injustice."<sup>1</sup>

His Thanksgiving discourse for 1861 on "The Modes and Duties of Emancipation," and a sermon preached on the first anniversary of the firing on Sumter, show that thorough study of the problems on hand, and that easy grasp of great principles, which were then his unconscious preparation for his memorable embassy to England in 1863.

In the first of these sermons he strongly urged immediate emancipation, if that were consonant with the legitimate powers of the Constitution. He favored no usurpation of power. "This conflict must be carried on *through* our institutions, not *over* them." He believed that emancipation had already begun. "Slaves in the possession of the United States can be nothing but men." He showed how the cotton-raising South, by rebelling, had encouraged free-labor cotton in the West Indies, Africa, India, and China. "The thunder that rocks us is the calm that raises cotton in other lands."

Emancipation was the goal to which everything pointed. He believed also that the great conflict would destroy the pestilent heresy of State Sovereignty, and bring the South at last to respect the North. "The people who congregate at our fashionable watering-places are not always the best exponents of Northern society. The other place where the North and South met was in the halls of Congress; and Heaven forbid that it should be thought that the men hitherto there had fairly represented

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 321.

Northern virtue or courage! But now we have sent a representative body that we are quite willing should march through the South to tell them what Northern men are, and what Northern men can do. By the time our army has gone through the Southern States there will be a change in public opinion there with respect to the manhood, the courage, the power, and the resources of the North."<sup>1</sup>

In the sermon on the anniversary of Sumter, he showed that the year past had been the heroic and memorable year of the common people of America. They had been possessed by a patriotic excitement, not an unreasoning and furious burst of patriotic zeal, but a wise, strong, religious, and self-sacrificing patriotism. The year had shown that Northern men made splendid soldiers, better even than those of the South, because of better moral material. He closed his discourse with a trumpet peal of faith and exultation which might almost have pierced to the shores of England. "We will give every dollar that we are worth, every child that we have, and our own selves; we will bring all we are and all that we have, and offer them up freely; but this country shall be one and undivided. We will have one Constitution, and one Liberty, and that universal. The Atlantic shall sound it, and the Pacific shall echo it back, deep answering to deep, that shall reverberate from the Lakes on the North to the unfrozen Gulf on the South—'One Nation, One Constitution, one Starry Banner!' Hear it, England, one country and indivisible! Hear it, Europe, one people and inseparable.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 338.

One God, one hope, one baptism, one Constitution, one Government, one Nation, one country, one people—cost what it may, we will have it!"<sup>1</sup>

Had it not been that the fire which glowed in these words pervaded the whole North, there would have been no victory for Freedom in that battle of giants, and no pæan of triumph, such as Lowell poured forth in his great Commemoration Ode at the close of the war.

The six months that followed were a time of great disheartenment to the National cause. The noble Army of the Potomac, the pride and hope of the North, was not led by General McClellan to victory. Military disasters made strong men weary of the long agony of war. The daily tidings from the front delayed hope and made the patriot heart-sick. There was no definite emancipation policy yet disclosed by the President, and the war lacked moral enthusiasm and uplift. Whittier gave immortal expression to the agony, and prayer, and faith of those who saw the Republic waiting beneath God's furnace blast, "the pangs of transformation."

"O brother! if thine eye can see  
Tell how and when the end shall be,  
What hope remains for thee and me.

Then Freedom sternly said: 'I shun  
No strife nor pang beneath the sun,  
Where human rights are staked and won.

I knelt with Ziska's hunted flock,  
I watched in Toussaint's cell of rock,  
I walked with Sidney to the block.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 358.

The Moor of Marston felt my tread,  
Through Jersey's snows the march I led,  
My voice Magenta's charges sped."

Thus, in his vision of *The Watchers*, he sang of Freedom's colloquy with Peace, and the sad strains end, as the vision passed away, in these words of faith:

"But round me, like a silver bell  
Rung down the listening sky to tell  
Of holy help, a sweet voice fell:  
'Still hope and trust,' it sang; 'the rod  
Must fall, the wine-press must be trod,  
But all is possible with God.'"

Mr. Beecher urged and urged the National Government to announce a clear, positive anti-slavery programme. Since his editorship of *The Independent* began he had made that journal a leading force in the great National struggle. After the capture of Mason and Slidell he had written with moderation, and yet with great boldness, on "war with England," and his words were destined to be perverted and turned against him, when he himself appeared in England as the advocate of the Union cause. He had urged Congress to impose on the people every tax which was needed to make the war the most effective. He had urged the pulpit to inspire the people with a new willingness to make sacrifices for the life and glory of the Nation.

In the summer of 1862 his pen was probably mightier than any voice, in making clear to the people and to the Government the truth that slavery must be destroyed. With a passionate energy of remonstrance he wrote against the dilatoriness and apparent timidity of the President.

"We have a country. We have a cause. We have a people. Let all good men pray that God will give us a Government!"

"There is no use of concealing it. The people are beginning to distrust their rulers—not their good nature, their patriotism, their honesty, but their capacity for the exigency of military affairs. They know that in war an hour often carries a campaign in its hand. A day is a year. The President seems to be a man without any value of time."

These judgments were natural enough to a man of Mr. Beecher's prophet-like vision, not charged himself with the responsibilities of the President, whose great mind surveyed the whole field of the Nation's life, and who, when he finally took a step, planned to carry with him the consent of the great body of the people, many of them sluggish, indifferent, and naturally opposed to a vigorous anti-slavery policy.

"The South adjourns every question, and postpones every interest in favor of arms. The North is busy with conflicting schemes and interests—and is also mildly carrying on a war."

"Slavery has become a military question. One year has changed all things. A remiss and vacillating policy of the Administration; the committing of the armies of the United States for a whole year to a man who thought he was at West Point giving a four years' course of instruction to five hundred men infinitely at leisure, has changed the relations and possibilities of things. It has taken slavery out of the realm of discussion, and placed it in the arena of war."

"Nothing will unite this people like a bold annunciation of a moral principle. Let the American flag be lifted up by Mr. Lincoln, as was the brazen serpent, and let it be known that every man who looked upon it on this continent shall be free, and the tide of joy and irresistible enthusiasm will sweep away every obstacle."

"Great God, what a people hast Thou brought forth upon this continent! What love of liberty; what heroic love of law and institutions; what courage and constancy and self-sacrifice hast Thou given them! and no man is found to lead this so great a Nation! Be Thou Leader! Lord God of Hosts, hast Thou forgotten how to lead a people? There are no ages on Thy head! Years make Thee neither old nor weary! Behind thy unwrinkled brow no care dwells! Teach this people to heed no other Leader than Thyself! Then, led by Thee, teach them to be all-sufficient for every need of justice, and omnipotent for liberty."

This prayerful outburst reminds one of certain lines on Lincoln in Lowell's great Ode:

"For him her Old World moulds aside she threw,  
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast  
Of the unexhausted West,  
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,  
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.  
How beautiful to see  
Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,  
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead."

"We have been made irresolute, indecisive, and weak by the President's attempt to unite impossibilities; to make war and keep the peace; to strike hard

and not hurt; to invade Southern States and not meddle with their sovereignty; to put down rebellion without touching its cause."

"The President has the right and power to destroy slavery. Let him account to the civilized world for not doing it."

"Richmond determines, Washington reasons; Richmond is inflexible, Washington vacillates; Richmond knows what it wants to do, Washington wishes that it knew; Richmond loves slavery and hates liberty, Washington is somewhat partial to liberty and rather dislikes slavery; rebellion is wise and simple, Government is foolish."

But what an outburst of jubilation rose from Mr. Beecher's pulpit and editorial sanctum when the President's Proclamation of September, 1862, announced that on the first day of the New Year slaves in rebelling States were to be thenceforward and for ever free.

"The President's Proclamation will sift the North, give unity to its people, simplicity to its policy, liberty to its army! . . . The Proclamation emancipates slaves in thrice thirty days. But it emancipates the Government and the army to-day."

"God may peel me, and bark me, and strip me of my leaves, and do as He chooses with my earthly estate. I have lived long enough; I have had a good time. You cannot take back the blows I have given the Devil right in the face. I have uttered some words that will not die, because they are incorporated into the lives of men that will not die."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 337.



In a sermon, preached a few days after Lincoln's September Proclamation, on National Injustice and Penalty, among other notable things he said that infidelity "is refusing to hear God's voice, and to believe God's testimony in His providence. There are plenty of men who believe in Genesis, and Chronicles, and the Psalms, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and Ezekiel, and Matthew, and the other evangelists, and the rest of the New Testament clear down to the Apocalypse; there are plenty of men who believe in the letter of Scripture; and there are plenty of men who believe everything that God said four thousand years ago; but the Lord God Almighty is walking forth at this time in clouds and thunder such as never rocked Sinai. His voice is in all the land, and in all the earth, and those men that refuse to hear God in His own time, and in the language of the events that are taking place, are infidels."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of what should be the policy of the future, he referred to that class of men who believe that the remedy for all these evils was to gather together about twenty Secessionists and twenty Abolitionists and hang them! "I would tell you what hanging Abolitionists will do. It will do just exactly what would be done if, when a terrible disease had broken out on a ship, the crew should kick the doctors overboard, and the medicine after them. The disease would stay on board and only the cure would go overboard. You may rage as much as you please, but the men who labored to bring back the voices of the founders of this Union; the men whose faith touches

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 276.

the original principles of God's Word; the men who are in sympathy with Luther; the men that breathe the breath that fanned the flame of the Revolution; the men who walk in the spirit of the old Puritans; the men that are like the first framers of this model Republic,—they are the men, if there be any medicine yet, by whose hand God will send the cure. Hang them? That was the medicine that the Jews had when they crucified Christ. The Lord of Glory was put upon an ignominious tree and they thought they would have peace in Jerusalem!"<sup>1</sup>

On the first of January, 1863, President Lincoln issued a proclamation which filled the North with a new hope, that proclamation on which he invoked not in vain the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God. Eighteen hundred and sixty-three was the year of Vicksburg and Gettysburg and the greatest year in Mr. Beecher's life, for then he finished, as Dr. Holmes well said, "a more remarkable embassy than any envoy who has represented us in Europe since Franklin pleaded the cause of the young Republic at the court of Versailles."

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 377.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"YOU WONDER WHY WE'RE HOT, JOHN?"

MR. BEECHER'S visit to England, in 1863, was an international event. His service to the cause of liberty and of the American Union was also a service to all the English-speaking nations which are bound together by so many of the strongest ties. The lion-like courage, the lightning wit, the invincible good nature, the marvelous pluck and perseverance, the mastery of the complicated case in hand in all its details, the glowing patriotism, the fiery indignation, the intense love for what was best in Old England, the ardent Christian convictions, vitalizing and inspiring every sentence, and lifting the American ambassador of freedom to heights of noble eloquence rarely equaled in the annals of English oratory, make this episode in Mr. Beecher's life a page of history destined to be lustrous through many generations.

Worn out by his toils, which had been almost uninterrupted since Lincoln's election in 1860, sharing in all of the vast excitements of the first two dreadful years of the Civil War, Mr. Beecher decided, in the summer of 1863, that two or three months spent in Europe would add to his future ability to serve the Nation at home.

Accompanied by Dr. John Raymond, President of Vassar College, and Rev. Dr. Holme, he embarked for

England, his Church agreeing to pay all of his expenses. Mr. Beecher was not sent by the Government. Secretary Seward was not his friend. The great-hearted Lincoln loved and admired him, and, according to one report, deemed him the greatest of living Americans. But he had criticised the President so severely and constantly that he supposed that Lincoln "took no stock" in him.

Arriving in England, and finding the public feeling bitterly hostile to the Union cause, he would not speak there, and would not permit any one to pay a penny of his expenses. Furthermore, he would not enter the house of any man who was not known to be a friend of the North in its great conflict.

He has stated that, lying on his back, as the ship was going over, uncomfortably sick nearly all the way, he spoke thus to himself: "'I have no doubt whatever of the final success of this cause, and I am perfectly certain that slavery is going with it. I have been, for at least twenty-five or thirty years, studying the Constitution of the United States, the history of the debates, and laying up all manner of material for discussion on the subject of slavery, and now we have got so far along that this question, I suppose, is settled, and all this material must go to profit and loss. I shall never want to use it again; so let it go.' Whereas, in point of fact, all these accumulations and investigations were brought about by direct Providence in an unforeseen way, as it were, to enable me to go through the campaign that I afterward entered into in England."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Beecher," p. 163.

He was met at the Mersey by a Manchester committee with a request for him to lecture, but he had made up his mind not to speak in England. A personal friend of his, Rev. Dr. Campbell, had said before his arrival that Mr. Beecher had come to Europe to enjoy himself, while his country was in sore distress, and that he was greatly mistaken in thinking that he could twist the English public around his fingers as easily as he did the Americans.

After all, Mr. Beecher did speak in Glasgow at a temperance breakfast, with the understanding that nothing should be reported, although his speech appeared in all of the papers. He also addressed one hundred and fifty Congregational clergymen in London, whom he rebuked for their want of sympathy with the cause of American nationality and freedom. This address was pronounced by Dr. Henry Allon the best of Mr. Beecher's speeches. He was greatly disappointed to find that the English Independents were not to be leaned upon. They said that they sympathized with liberty, but "they sympathized with liberty exactly as an icicle sympathises with sunlight in summer—it chills you to go near it." He found the deepest ignorance in regard to American affairs and institutions among people where he had a right, as he felt, to expect more intelligence. Of all men he was the best fitted to elucidate and disentangle the dark and perplexed problems which were then distracting the Old World and the New. "An American State question," as Oliver Wendell Holmes has said, "looks as mysterious to an English audience as an ear of Indian corn wrapped up in its sheath, to an English wheat-grower. Mr. Beecher husks it

for them as only an American born and bred can do."<sup>1</sup>

Among the things which most annoyed him in Great Britain was England's hypocritical antipathy to war, that is, war with the South. At the reception given to him on his return to Brooklyn, he said: "Nowhere else in the world is there so tender a conscience on the subject of war as England has—when she is not waging it. She has only three wars now, I believe, on hand,—in Japan, China, New Zealand, Australia, or somewhere—and the rest of her leisure she occupies with a profound regret at war! If it was for a ship at sea, she was ready to go to war with us; if it was for a territory on the Antarctic Ocean, she was ready to go to war with the savages; if to open trade, she had no objection to burn down a town of a hundred thousand inhabitants; but when a people are making war for their own life, for everything that dignifies humanity, England stands wondering at God's patience with men that will make war."<sup>2</sup>

He learned, as never before, that England, as represented by her nobility, dreaded the growing influence of American institutions. "As a class they are against us, and for most obvious reasons. We are not accustomed to estimate the effect of our example upon European institutions. When he takes his walk abroad, it is not the elephant that weighs and measures his own gravity as he treads on the field-mouse's tail. It is the mouse that meditates. And for such a gigantic nation as this, on such a continent as this, while we are treading the steps of accom-

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 426. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 663.

plishing history, we do not feel the jar we ourselves make." He quotes the *Saturday Review*, that brilliant and "unprincipled paper," as having the frankness to say that English criticisms were not made because they disliked us, but because they found our ideas and examples working in Great Britain, and they were forced, in order to defeat those ideas in England, to attack us in America.<sup>1</sup>

In his oration upon Abraham Lincoln, George Bancroft said: "Aristocracy had gazed with terror on the growth of a commonwealth where freeholds existed by the million, and religion was not in bondage to the State; and now they could not repress their joy at its peril." "No dynasty," wrote Dr. Holmes, "can look the fact of successful, triumphant self-government in the face without seeing a shroud in its banner and hearing a knell in its shouts of victory." While the English sovereign was a wise and judicious friend of the national cause, and while the late Prince Consort had been a fast friend of America, Mr. Beecher discovered that the mass of the English nobility were hostile.

Resisting the invitations of the Anti-Slavery Union to make speeches in the principal cities, he hurried to the continent in a towering rage. He had found nearly all the leading men in public and professional life, many of the Quakers, and nearly everybody who rode in a first-class car, thoroughly hostile to the American cause, while most of the Congregational ministers of Great Britain, excepting those in Wales, were either lukewarm or sympathetic with the South.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 664.

"I found that on the railways, on the boats, in the hotels, wherever there was a traveling public, there was a public that sympathized with the South and was adverse to the North." "No man," he said, "ever knows what his country is to him until he has gone abroad and heard it everywhere denounced and sneered at. I had ten men's wrath in me, and my own share is tolerably large, at the attitude assumed all around me toward my country."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have one proof of Mr. Gladstone's famous declaration that "in England the masses have usually been right and the classes have usually been wrong." At the close of his address, given at the reception in Brooklyn on his return, Mr. Beecher did full justice to those brave Englishmen of eminence who, though a small minority, did stand by the noblest traditions of English history during those fierce and fateful years when England, as never before or since, was divided over a question that was not immediately a part of her own politics.

The spirit of '76, the fiery patriotism that had come down to him through generations of elect men, and which was associated with every fiber of his manhood, with every Christian conviction of his soul, and with every atom of his vast hope for humanity—all this was tugging at his heart, and yet he determined to remain silent.

For several months he traveled through France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and came back to Paris. He enjoyed again the rich art treasures of Europe, and his spirit was refreshed by the Swiss scenery, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 166.



diverted from the national agony which had almost worn him out.

Mrs. Stowe reports that he had a period of special enjoyment in Berlin, where, in the Museum, under the instruction of the Director of Arts, he carefully examined the historical collections, so ample and so scientifically arranged, which mark the development of European art. Dr. Storrs, in his eloquent address of welcome on Mr. Beecher's return, said: "The rest and leisure of those weeks upon the Continent prepared him not only to face the rough seas that have delayed his return but to meet and master the more tempestuous savagery of the Liverpool mob. The Alpine peaks to whose summit he climbed contributed, no doubt, to lift him afterward to the climax of his eloquence at London and at Manchester."<sup>1</sup>

The news of the surrender of Vicksburg came to him in Paris on Sunday morning, and he walked to the church on air. Taking a seat in the pew of the American Minister, Mr. Dayton, he told Mr. Dayton's daughter, and a friend of Miss Dayton's, who was in the seat with her, the great news. The scene that followed is worth repeating in his own words. "Then we rose up when the hymn was given out. She stood at my side and began to sing, and as she finished one line she broke into a flood of tears and down she sat, and down sat the other, and they just shook they were so overwhelmed with feeling."<sup>2</sup>

But the news of Gettysburg came also on the same blessed Sunday, and in his elation Mr. Beecher called

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 437.   <sup>2</sup> "Life," p. 167.

a cab and hurried with the glorious tidings to Mr. Dayton's house.

"In the Grand Hotel there was a great glass-covered court, and, as I would stand at the landing and look down, there would always be a group of Southerners in the left-hand corner. It had come to be a resort of theirs, and there were ever so many there. Up to this time, when I had walked through, I would be insulted in every way by whistles and sneering remarks, etc., and they would tell the servants to carry messages to me which I learned afterward the proprietor would not allow to be sent. As I went in this day of the double victory, there they sat, a dozen or fifteen of them. I had never taken any notice of them hitherto, not the least, but after I got this news I walked in and strode right down in front of them without saying a word, but carrying my head high, I can tell you, and went upstairs to my room. I never saw one of them afterwards, and I was there myself several days."<sup>1</sup>

Returning to England, he was again urged to make speeches, but he replied, "No, I am going home in September; I do not want to have anything more to do with England." But the friends of America finally changed his mind by showing him what sacrifices they had made for the national cause, and that if he refused them his help, the enemies of the North would say, "Even your friends in America despise you." It must have been a hard struggle when a cause, supported and defended by John Bright, John Stuart Mill, the Duke of Argyle, Richard Cobden,

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 167-168.

W. E. Foster, Goldwin Smith, Prof. Cairns, Mr. Thomas Hughes, George Thompson, and a score of eminent Englishmen besides, felt the need of such reinforcement as an American orator could bring them.

Furthermore, Mr. Beecher learned that there was a movement on foot to hold great meetings among the non-voting masses in order to bring about a change in their feelings. He learned that these non-voting friends of the North, some of whom like the cotton-spinners of Lancashire, had seen their children starving and in rags about them, rather than lift one finger for slavery or do one thing to antagonize the cause of free labor, were an immense political power respected by the aristocracy and the Government.

It was fear of the great, true, democratic heart of the English common people that had kept Parliament from declaring for the Confederacy. The spirit of liberty was not dead in the non-voting masses, and all efforts to hold popular meetings in behalf of slavery had thus far been unsuccessful. Mr. Cobden had said of the English common people that they had an instinctive feeling that their cause was bound up in the prosperity of the United States.

America had felt, with keen agony, that the moral sympathy of England had been given to the South and to slavery, and the Northern feeling against Great Britain was intense.

"You wonder why we're hot, John?  
Your mark waz on the guns,  
The neutral guns thet shot, John,  
Our brothers an' our sons.

Ole Uncle S., sez he, I guess  
There's human blood, sez he,  
By fits and starts in Yankee hearts,  
Though't may surprise J. B.  
More'n it would you an' me."

"The denial of moral sympathy in Great Britain," said Mr. Beecher, "was accompanied by the most active exertions of certain parts of the British people in behalf of the South; so much so that I think it will scarcely be doubted by any man that if the ship-yards, the foundries, the looms, and the shops of Great Britain had refused their succor to rebellion, the rebellion would have died out in the Nation long ago."<sup>1</sup>

The English Government would have been eager to espouse the Southern cause had it not been that the English masses were still true to America and freedom. It was shown Mr. Beecher that he had a mission in helping to keep the popular heart of England loyal to its own best convictions. America and the better England will always be grateful that he finally yielded to the importunate arguments of the brave and enlightened friends of the North. His service in strengthening the right-minded elements among the English people and in heading off the incalculable mischiefs which were planned, can scarcely be overestimated.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 659

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CONQUERING THE MOB.

MEETINGS were arranged for Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London. During the time preceding his opening speech, Mr. Beecher was in one of his most despondent and afflicted moods. There was an unusual deal of excitement in Manchester over the approaching event. A storm was brooding. The streets were placarded with outrageous posters "full of all lies and bitterness." Some of the placards were in blood-red letters. The friends who met Mr. Beecher were greeted by him with this question: "Are we going to back down?" They said "No," and inquired how he felt about it, and were made happy to hear him say, "I am going to be heard, and if not now, I am going to be by and by."

After preparing the notes for his first speech, Mr. Beecher passed through one of those horrible experiences of darkness and agony to which his mind was occasionally subject. He felt that he would utterly fail before an English audience in the advocacy of the cause intrusted to him, and his morbid sufferings became terrible beyond conception. In recalling this experience he said: "I think I never went through such a struggle of darkness and suffering in

all my life as I did that afternoon. It was about the going down of the sun when God brought me to that state in which I said, 'Thy will be done; I am willing to be annihilated; I am willing to fail if the Lord wants me to; I give it all up to the hands of God,' and rose up in a state of peace and of serenity simply unspeakable, and when the coach came to take me down to Manchester Hall I felt no disturbance nor dreamed of anything but success."

No one can rightly understand some of the later experiences of Mr. Beecher's life who does not realize into what depths his spirit sometimes sank, and to what heights it often suddenly rose with a divine resilient energy. Writing to a friend ten days later he could say, "I have had the sweetest experience of love to God and man of all my life."

"God awakened in my breast the desire to be a true and full Christian towards England the moment I put foot on her shores."

"I had at Liverpool and Glasgow as sweet an inward peace as ever I had in any of the loving meetings in dear old Plymouth Church."

"And again and again when the uproar raged and I could not speak, my heart seemed to be taking the infinite fulness of the Saviour's pity and breathing it out on those poor troubled men."

"I have had no disturbance of personality. I have been willing, yea, with eagerness, to be myself contemptible in men's sight if only my disgrace could be to the honor of that cause which is intrusted to our own dear country."

"There passes before me a view of God's glory, so pure, so serene, uplifted, filling the ages, and more and

more revealed, that I almost wish to lose my own identity, to be a drop of dew that falls into the sea and becomes a part of the sublime whole that glows under every line of latitude and sounds on every shore."

"And in all this time I have not had one unkind feeling toward a single human being. Even those who are opposers I have pitied with undying compassion, and enemies around me have seemed harmless and objects of charity rather than potent foes to be destroyed."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that a man capable of passing through such experiences was liable to pass through others in which his words could not wisely be judged by the ordinary standards of average men.

His speech in Manchester was delivered October 9th. When he reached the hall the vast crowd was already tumultuous, but he felt victory in his blood. The Chairman introduced him as one of the American heroes, and, much to his amusement, called him the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher Stowe! About six thousand persons were present, and among them partisans of the Southern cause. The deafening cheers with which Mr. Beecher was received were followed by hisses. He said, in recalling the experiences of that night, "As soon as I began to speak the great audience began to show its teeth, and I had not gone on fifteen minutes before an unparalleled scene of confusion and interruption ensued. No American who has not seen an English mob can form any conception of one. This meeting had a very large multitude

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," pp. 560-563.

of men in it who came there for the purpose of destroying the meeting and carrying it the other way when it came to a vote." <sup>1</sup>

He measured his audience, and came to the conclusion that one-fourth of them were opposed to him and one-fourth were sympathetic, and that his proper plan would be to appeal to the great middle section, who were uncommitted. "How to do this was a problem. The question was who could hold out the longest. There were five or six storm centers boiling and whirling all at one time; here some one pounding on a group with his umbrella, and shouting, 'Sit down there'; over there a row between two or three combatants; somewhere else a group all yelling together at the top of their voices. It was like talking to a storm a sea." <sup>2</sup>

In another account of his experience with English mobs he said: "I had to speak extempore on subjects the most delicate and difficult as between our two nations, where even a shading of my words was of importance, and yet I had to outscreech a mob, and drown the roar of a multitude. It was like driving a team of runaway horses and making love to a lady at the same time." <sup>3</sup>

In his Manchester experience Mr. Beecher was getting ready for Liverpool. He threw away his notes, and, with perfect self-possession and perfect good temper, put his whole force into the tremendous conflict. "The uproar would come in on this side and on that, and they would put in insulting ques-

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 171.   <sup>2</sup> "Life," p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Stowe's "Men of Our Times," p. 560.



tions and all sorts of calls to me, and I would wait until the noise had subsided, and then get in about five minutes of talk. The reporters would get that down, and then up would come another noise."<sup>1</sup>

After the first interruption he said: "My friends, we will have a whole night's session, but we will be heard. I have not come to England to be surprised that those men, whose cause cannot bear the light, are afraid of free speech." Mr. Beecher was immensely amused by some things which occurred, and once could not refrain from laughing outright. "The audience stopped its uproar, wondering what I was laughing at, and that gave me another chance, and I caught it."

With great skill he linked the American cause to that of civil and religious liberty the world over, and especially with that which is best in English history. "I covet no higher honor than to have my name joined to the list of that great company of noble Englishmen from whom we derived our doctrines of liberty."<sup>2</sup>

What were called American ideas were simply English ideas bearing fruit in America.

"We bring back American sheaves, but the seed corn we got in England: and if, on a larger sphere and under circumstances of unobstruction, we have reared mightier harvests, every sheaf contains the grain that has made old England rich for a hundred years." We are not surprised that such words were followed by great cheering.

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 172.    <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 439.

Alluding to the words that he had spoken in America which had given offense in England, he said: "I have had one simple, honest purpose which I have pursued ever since I have been in public life, and that was with all the strength that God has given me to maintain the cause of the poor and weak in my country, and, if in the heightened heat of conflict, some words have been over-sharp, and some positions have been taken heedlessly, are you the men to call one to account? What if some exquisite dancing-master, standing on the edge of a battle where Richard Cœur de Lion swung his axe, criticised him by saying that his gestures and postures violated the proprieties of polite life! When dandies fight they think how they look, but when men fight they think only of deeds." He disclaimed being there either on trial or on defense.

"I have never ceased to feel that war or even unkind feelings between two such great nations would be one of the most unpardonable and atrocious offenses that the world ever beheld, and I have regarded everything that needlessly led to those feelings out of which war comes as being in itself wicked."<sup>1</sup>

He showed that American resentment against England was greater than against France, because America had so much in common with the English people. Love toward England had been growing, and England's conduct offended America more than that of France. If intemperate words had been spoken against England, they were uttered in the mortification of disappointed affection. What America ex-

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 440-441.

pected of liberty-loving England was moral sympathy and nothing more.

He had no doubt about the issue of the conflict. Population, wealth, intellect, and justice were with the North, and before long one thing more would be added—victory. He showed that the conflict between the two sections in America was between liberty and slavery, and that hence the popular sympathy of England must be with the North when the facts became known.

The address at Manchester was largely a history of the political movements which had gone on for half a century and which resulted in a division over the subject of slavery. He acknowledged that the North had not been utterly free from complicity with oppression.

“For years together New York has been as much controlled by the South, in matters relating to slavery, as Mobile or New Orleans. But, even so, the slave-trade was clandestine. It abhorred the light; it crept in and out of the harbor stealthily, despised and hated by the whole community. Is New York to be blamed for demoniac deeds done by her limbs while yet under possession of the devil? She is now clothed, and in her right mind. There was one Judas: is Christianity therefore a hoax? There are hissing men in this audience: are you not respectable? The folly of the few is the light which God casts to irradiate the wisdom of many.”

Punctured by cheers, laughter, hisses, and cries of “Hear,” the oration proceeded. After defending the Constitution as an anti-slavery document, he showed how the laws of the slave States treated slaves, not as

human beings, but as "chattels," which is the same word as "cattle," with the "h" left out, the difference being between quadruped and biped. The Constitution spoke of slaves as "persons," the laws of the slave States called them "things."

"Go to Mississippi, the State of Jefferson Davis, and her fundamental law pronounces the slave to be only a 'thing'; and again the Federal Constitution sounds back 'persons.' Go to Louisiana and its Constitution, and still the doctrine of devils is enunciated—it is 'chattel,' it is 'thing.' Looking upon those for whom Christ felt mortal agony in Gethsemane and stretched himself out for death on Calvary, their laws call them 'things' and 'chattels'; and still in tones of thunder the Constitution of the United States says 'persons.'"<sup>1</sup>

How keenly he depicted the evil effects on morality which the growing profitableness of slavery had produced! The great demand for cotton throughout the world, and the invention of the cotton-gin, sent up the price of slaves. "Slaves that before had been worth from three to four hundred dollars, began to be worth six hundred; that knocked away one-third of the adherence to the moral law. Then they became worth seven hundred dollars, and one-half the law went; then eight and nine hundred dollars, and then there was no such a thing as moral law; then one thousand or twelve hundred dollars, and slavery became one of the beatitudes."<sup>2</sup>

After a rapid and pointed history of the American slavery contest he turned his quick fire on the attempt

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 448.    <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 449.

to make England believe that war had nothing to do with slavery. "It had to do with nothing else." "Against this withering fact—against this damning allegation—what is their escape? They reply, 'The North is just as bad as the South.' Now we are coming to the marrow of it. If the North is as bad as the South, why did not the South find it out before you did? If the North had been in favor of oppressing the black man, and just as much in favor of slavery as the South, how is it that the South has gone to war with the North because they believe to the contrary?"

Mr. Beecher paid some attention to the credulous president of the Society for Southern Independence, Lord Wharncliffe, who was laboring to remove the erroneous impression that the efforts of the South tended "to support the existence of slavery!" That such silliness as Lord Wharncliffe represented was believed by any large portion of English society is an evidence of the extremes to which prejudice and misrepresentation may be carried. Mr. Beecher's exposure of his lordship's folly was as complete and luminous as a sunburst and at times as terrific as a sheaf of forked lightnings.

In this speech he struck down Lord Brougham's objection, a very common one in England at that time, that the North was fighting for the Union and not for emancipation. The Union administered by Northern men would work out emancipation. The maintenance of the Union was the best way to secure to the African his rights.

"The North was like a ship carrying passengers, tempest tossed, and while the sailors were laboring

and the captain and officers directing, some of the grumblers came up from amongst the passengers and said: 'You are all the time working to save the ship, but you don't care to save the passengers.' I should like to know how you would save the passengers so well as by taking care of the ship."<sup>1</sup>

An interruption was made at this point by the Chairman to announce that the Government was to seize and detain in Liverpool the rams prepared to assist the South. After the cheering had ceased Mr. Beecher, making no reference to the interruption, continued along the line of his argument and spoke some grand words about the colored regiments, who, fighting for liberty, were proving the manhood of the African race.

This speech was reported in the chief papers of the Kingdom and it was discovered that Mr. Beecher was not to be put down by the mob. He had made up his mind that England was to hear him. Since Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Mr. Beecher had not sunk even occasionally into those hours of despondency in regard to the Nation. Before coming to Great Britain he had felt that the National cause was in the extremest peril. He said, "We had at that time converted almost every sea-going craft into a man-of-war, and this blockade was in the main well served. Europe stood watching as a vulture does to see the sick lamb or kine stagger and fall, and from her dry branch of observation she is ready to plunge down. Napoleon did. He had already sent French armies into Mexico. That was a mere preface.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 463.

Mexico was not his final object. The recovering again of territory that had once belonged to France lay in the achievements and expectations of this weak and wicked potentate in the future. In this condition of things we were hovering on the very edge of intervention. It was well known, by those acquainted with the condition of affairs in other lands, that Napoleon was disposed by every art and intrigue to persuade the Government of Great Britain to interpose, to break the blockade and to give its moral support to the rebellion of the South."<sup>1</sup>

He had found in England almost universal skepticism as to the success of the North. He was everywhere told, "You will never subdue the South," and he always answered, "We shall subdue the South." In this spirit he went to work to subdue England, for he felt that it was of the utmost importance that right views should prevail, and that the secret hopes and wishes of the ruling English classes should get no support from the English masses.

"As martyrs coin their blood, he coined his breath  
And dimmed the *preacher's* in the patriot's fame."

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In describing his own experience after that tremendous first night in Manchester he said: "Nobody knows better than I do what it is to feel that every interest that touches the heart of a Christian man, and a patriotic man, and a lover of liberty, is being assailed wantonly, to stand between one nation and your own and feel that you are in a situation in which your country rises or falls with you. And God was

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 399.

behind it all: I felt it and I knew it, and when I got through and the vote was called off you might have thought it was a tropical thunder-storm that swept through that hall as the 'Ayes' were thundered, while the 'Noes' were an insignificant and contemptible minority. It had all gone on our side, and such enthusiasm I never saw." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 174.



## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE HEART OF BRUCE RETURNS TO SCOTLAND.

AT Glasgow, on the 13th of October, he gave his second address. Perhaps it would be wiser to say, with Dr. Holmes, that he made a single speech in Great Britain, delivering it piecemeal in different places. Beginning with an impassioned eulogy of Scotland, he thrilled and magnetized the crowded Glasgow audience. "No one who has been born and reared in Scotland can know the feeling with which, for the first time, such a one as I have visited this land, classic in song and in history. I have been reared in a country whose history is brief. So vast is it, that one might travel night and day for a week and yet scarcely touch historic ground. Its history is yet to be written, yet to be acted. But I come to this land, which, though small, is as full of memories as the heaven is of stars, and almost as bright. There is not the most insignificant piece of water that does not make my heart thrill with some story of heroism, or some remembered poem; for not only has Scotland had the good fortune to have had men who knew how to make history, but she has reared those bards who have known how to sing her fame. And every steep and every valley, and almost every single league on which my feet have trod have made me feel

as if I was walking in a dream. I never expected to feel my eyes overflow with tears of gladness that I have been permitted in the prime of life to look upon dear old Scotland. For your historians have taught us history, your poets have been the charm of our firesides, your theologians have enriched our libraries; from your philosophers—Reid, Brown, and Stewart—we have derived the elements of our philosophy, and your scientific researches have greatly stimulated the study of science in our land. I come to Scotland almost as a pilgrim would to Jerusalem, and to see those scenes whose story had stirred my imagination from my earliest youth: and I can pay no higher compliment than to say that, having seen some part of Scotland, I am satisfied; and permit me to say that if, when you know me, you are a thousandth part as satisfied with me as I am with you, we shall get along very well together." Four times this exordium was interrupted with applause, and Mr. Beecher could not have more wisely begun his address than by pouring out his grateful heart in these noble words.

Glasgow was the headquarters of the shipping interests concerned in the blockade. Mr. Beecher discussed the relations of slavery to the working classes everywhere and applied his arguments to the men before him who were helping to degrade the cause of labor by coöperating with the South.

He has himself reported that the interruptions in Glasgow were very bad, but not at all like those in Manchester. "After they were once stilled you would have thought that we were in a revival." He demonstrated that the cause of labor was one in all lands, and he showed how slavery brought labor into

contempt, and that it was a shame for the men of Glasgow to be building ships to antagonize free labor in America. "They were driving nails in their own coffins." The questions put to him here were very shrewd, and his replies involved the necessity of explaining how the North was hampered, by its obligations under the Constitution and by the reserved rights of the States, from interfering with slavery sheltered by law.

Regarding the misrepresentations scattered broadcast about himself, he said, that, had they been wanting, so accustomed had he been to misrepresentation in his own land, he would have felt that something was lacking in the English atmosphere! After pronouncing that ninety-nine out of every hundred of those things charged against him were wholly falsehoods he said: "If I never spared my own country, if I never spared the American Church, nor the Government, nor my own party, nor my personal friends, did you expect that I would treat you better than I did those of my own country?"<sup>1</sup>

The destiny of America was to establish regulated Christian liberty for the American Continent, and interference from France or Great Britain would not be permitted. After showing how slavery became profitable, and was made more profitable in certain parts of the South by the breeding of slaves for the market, and that the domestic slave-trade carried on between Virginia and the Gulf States was unspeakably worse than the African slave-trade, after showing that a system of slavery requires intellectual and

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 467.

moral ignorance in the slave and that his degradation passes over to his work, and disastrously affects all labor, even that performed by free white men, and that while the North was a vast hive of universal industry in which idleness had become as disreputable as labor was in the South—he claimed the right of demanding from the workmen of Glasgow that they should give their hearty sympathies to those who were seeking to make work honorable everywhere.

“For a grand and final contest between the sin and guilt of labor-oppression and the peace and glory of free labor, He set apart the Western Continent. That the trial might be above all suspicion, to the right, He gave the meager soil, the austere climate, short summers, long and rigorous winters; to the wrong he gave fair skies, abundant soils, valleys of the tropics teeming with almost spontaneous abundance. The Christian doctrine of work has made New England a garden, while Virginia is a wilderness. The free North is abundantly rich; the South bankrupt! Every element of prosperous society abounds in the North and is lacking in the South. There is more real wealth in the simple little State of Massachusetts than in any ten Southern States.”

“Oppression is as accursed in the field as it is upon the throne. It is as odious before God under the slave-driver’s hat as under the prince’s crown or priest’s mitre.”<sup>1</sup>

He declared that the South meant to reopen the African slave-trade for the purpose of cheapening negroes, and that hence every freeman in Great Brit-

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 473-474.

ain who favored the South really cast in his influence for the opening of that trade. When hisses as well as cheers followed this utterance, he said: "When you put a drunken engineer to drive a train, you may not *mean* to come to any harm, but when you are in that train you cannot help yourselves. It is just the same here—you do not mean the slave-trade, but *they do*, and all they ask of you is, 'Be blind.'"

Perhaps no part of his speech in England was more effective than his reply to the question, "Why did the North not permit the South to go since their economies were so diametrically opposed." "When I am asked, 'Why not let the South go?' I return for an answer a question, 'Be pleased to tell me what part of the British Islands you are willing to let go from under the Crown, when its inhabitants secede and set up for independence?'

"Secession was an appeal from the ballot to the bullet. It was not a noble minority defying usurpation or despotism in the assertion of fundamental rights. It was a despotism which, when put to shame by the will of a free people, expressed through the ballot-box, rushed into rebellion as a means of perpetuating slavery."

The hisses were plentifully sprinkled through parts of this Glasgow address, and Mr. Beecher and a good many of his auditors got into a perfect tangle of fierce affirmations and denials as to whether the South would ever come back into the Union.

To the impudent assertion that the North was not sincere in this conflict, Mr. Beecher replied in a burst of noble eloquence, in words which every Northern patriot who remembers those days of sacrifice and awful

agony might be proud to wear as a frontlet between his eyes. "They have come not like the Goths and Huns from a wandering life or inclement skies to seek fairer skies and richer soil, but from homes of luxury, from cultivated farms, from busy workshops, from literary labors, from the bar, the pulpit and the exchange, thronging around the old National flag that has symbolized *liberty* to mankind, all moved by a profound love of country, and firmly, fiercely determined that the Motherland shall not be divided, especially not in order that slavery may scoop out for itself a den of refuge from Northern civilization and an empire to domineer over all the American tropics. It is this sublime patriotism which, on every side, I hear stigmatized as a mad rush of National ambition! Has, then, the love of country run so low in Great Britain that the rising of a Nation to defend its territory, its Government, its flag, and all the institutions over which that flag has waved, is a theme for cold aversion in the pulpit and sneers in the pew? Is generosity dead in England that she will not admire in her children the very qualities which have made her children proud of the memories of their common English ancestors?"<sup>1</sup>

To Earl Russell's argument, in replying to Mr. Sumner, that America was the child of two rebellions—the Puritan and Revolutionary—Mr. Beecher said: "Were they rebellions against liberty to more despotism, or against oppression to more freedom? The English rebellion and the American rebellion were both toward greater freedom for all classes of

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 488.

men. This rebellion is for the sake of holding four million slaves to greater security and less annoyance from free institutions."

He brought things home with a resounding crash to the industries of Glasgow by affirming, amid applause and hisses, that every man who struck a blow on the iron that is put into those ships for the South is striking a blow and forging a manacle for the hand of the slave. "Every free laborer in old Glasgow who is laboring to rear up iron ships for the South is laboring to establish on sea and on land the doctrine that capital has a right to own labor."

The preacher whose whole life was a part of his religion; who made every English platform on which he spoke for America a pulpit for the principles of that Gospel which he loved, presented a Day-of-Judgment view of the question before the God-fearing men of Glasgow when he exclaimed: "O, I would rather, than all the crowns and thrones of earth, have the sweet assuring smile of Jesus when he says: 'Come, welcome, inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto Me.' And I would rather face the thunderbolt than stand before Him when he says on that terrible day, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these My little ones, ye did it not unto Me.' You strike God in the face when you work for slave-holders. Your money so got and quickly earned will be badly kept, and you will be poor before you can raise your children, and dying you will leave a memory that will rise against you on the Day of Judgment. By the solemnity of that Judgment, by the sanctity of conscience, by the love that you bear to humanity, by your old hereditary love of liberty—

in the name of God and of mankind—I charge you to come out from among them, to have nothing to do with the unclean and filthy lucre made by pandering to slavery.”<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of this tremendous speech he showed how unnatural it was for America to seek alliance with Russia rather than with England. Monstrous beyond words to depict would be a war between these two leaders of the English-speaking nations. It was a duty on both sides to avoid every occasion for offense, and since America was in anguish, staggering under the blows of a great rebellion, it was especially incumbent on Great Britain to be forbearing.

He said, and there is scarcely anything in modern eloquence more impressive, “Remember—remember—remember—we are carrying out our dead. Our sons, our brother’s sons, our sister’s children are in this great war of liberty and of principle.” It was brutal for a landlord to send out a warrant to distress a widowed mother as she was walking to the grave of her first-born son, “Yet it was in the hour of our mortal anguish that, when by an unauthorized act, one of the captains of our navy seized a British ship, for which our Government instantly offered all reparation, a British army was hurried to Canada. I do not undertake to teach the law that governs the question; but this I do undertake to say, and I will carry every generous man in this audience with me, when I affirm that if between America, bent double with the anguish of this bloody war, and Great

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 492.



Britain, who sits at peace, there is to be forbearance on either side, it should be on your side."

Amid great and prolonged cheering, a resolution of thanks for his admirable and eloquent address was passed by the meeting.

The next evening, October 14th, Mr. Beecher spoke in Edinburgh. With great difficulty he reached the platform. The people were so tightly wedged in that it was necessary that he should be hoisted over their heads and passed on by friendly hands up to the gallery, and down over the front of the gallery to the platform. Except at the beginning of the meeting the disturbances were comparatively slight, and the resolution protesting against slavery and encouraging the cause of Emancipation in America which was introduced, after what Dr. Alexander called Mr. Beecher's magnificent oration, was carried amid great cheering. At the start he was hissed as well as applauded. Deprecating somewhat the earnest pleadings of the Chairman that he be given a hearing, he stated that he had never thought it necessary to ask an audience in the East or in the West to listen to him, "Not even in America, the country, as we have lately been informed, of mobs."

In the midst of his recital of the history of the dispute between the North and the South, wherein he showed how the Southern States, finally wedded to slavery, had for fifty years taken possession of the Government, he turned his remarks so as to introduce a suspicious compliment to Great Britain. "All the filibustering and all the intimidations of Foreign Powers, all the so-called snubbing of Eastern Powers, happened during the period when the policy of the

country was controlled by the South. May I be permitted to look on it as a mark of victorious Christianity that England now loves her worst enemy, and is sitting with arms of sympathy around her neck?" But the compliment was followed by loud cheers.

With regard to Southern independence for which, as he agreed with Earl Russell in saying, the South was contending, he remarked: "What, then, is Southern independence? It is the meteor around the dark body of slavery. King Bomba of Naples wanted to be independent, and his idea of independence was that he should be let alone whilst he was oppressing his subjects. This very idea of independence has been the same since the days when Nimrod hunted men: this is the only independence the South is fighting for." <sup>1</sup>

Toward the close of his speech he made a remark concerning Abraham Lincoln's policy and character which deserves to be remembered. Speaking of the Emancipation Proclamation he said: "The President was very loath to take the steps he did; but, though slow, Abraham Lincoln was sure. A thousand men could not make him plant his foot before he was ready, ten thousand could not move it after he had put it down."

Mr. Beecher's estimate of the importance of the struggle in which the North was engaged may be seen from a letter which he wrote to his sister, Mrs. Stowe. "This contest is nothing more or less than a conflict between democratic and aristocratic institutions, in which success to one must be defeat to the other.

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 511.

The aristocratic party in England see this plainly enough and I do not propose to endeavor to pull the wool over their eyes. I do not expect sympathy from them. No order yet ever had any sympathy with what must prove their own downfall. We have got to settle this question *by our armies* and the opinions of mankind will follow." <sup>1</sup> Therefore it was that Mr. Beecher's whole heart and strength went into this great contest which he was waging with public opinion in Great Britain. All that strength was soon to bear a supreme test and "the sinews of a Titan's heart" were to be strained to the uttermost.

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<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 557.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

**"I HAVE FOUGHT WITH BEASTS AT EPHEBUS."**

PERHAPS the climax of Mr. Beecher's contest was his address at Liverpool on the 16th of October. Public excitement was intense, immense efforts were put forth to break down the speaker. Blood-red placards, intended to prejudice the people, lined the Liverpool streets. The Philharmonic Hall was thronged in every part.

When his name was spoken by the Chairman it was hissed, and when he stepped forward to speak he was received with groans as well as cheers. For some time he could not get beyond, "Ladies and Gentlemen." The Chairman threatened to call the police. In his second sentence Mr. Beecher brought in a denunciation of African slavery with elicited cheers. "For some time it was doubtful whether the celebrated Abolitionist would be allowed to speak: but those who sat near the reverend gentleman, and observed his firmly compressed lips and imperturbable demeanor saw at once that it would require something more than noise and spasmodic hisses to cause Mr. Beecher to lose heart."

This report from one of the Liverpool papers will indicate how Mr. Beecher impressed the intelligent English spectator. Perhaps a single half page from this Liverpool speech will give a better impression of the tumultuous scene than any description.

"And when in Manchester I saw these huge placards 'Who is Henry Ward Beecher?' [laughter, cries of "Quite right," and applause] and when in Liverpool I was told that there were those blood-red placards, purporting to say what Henry Ward Beecher had said, and calling upon Englishmen to suppress free speech, I tell you what I thought: I thought simply this, I am glad of it. [Laughter.] Why? Because if they had felt perfectly secure that you are the minions of the South and the slaves of slavery, they would have been perfectly still [applause and uproar]. And, therefore, when I saw so much nervous apprehension that if I were permitted to speak [hisses and applause], —when I found that they were afraid to have me speak [hisses and laughter, and "No," "No"], when I found that they considered my speaking damaging to their cause [applause], when I found that they appealed from facts and reasonings to mob law [applause and uproar] I said: No man need tell me what the heart and secret counsel of these men are. They tremble and are afraid."<sup>1</sup> [Applause, laughter, hisses, and "No," "No," and a voice "New York mob."]

It was fortunate for Mr. Beecher, who had to hurl his brief sentences between the short pauses of such a thunder-storm, that, as Dr. Holmes has said, "His ordinary speaking is pointed, *staccatoed*, as is that of most successful extemporaneous speakers; he is short-gaited; the movement of his thoughts is that of a chopping sea, rather than the long, rolling, rhythmical wave-procession of phrase-balancing rhetoricians."

Mr. Beecher's appeal to the manly tone and temper

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 517.

of Englishmen, to their love of fair play, produced a temporary good effect. He invited his friends to sit still and keep still. "I and my friends, the Secessionists, will make all the noise." And thus on that stormy night he urged the need of liberty, if labor, manufactures, and commerce were to be prosperous. He gave more than an inkling of his incipient free-trade theories, by speaking against a burdensome tariff: he showed the need of prosperity and education among the populations to which Liverpool sold her goods. He proved that "that nation is the best customer that is freest, because freedom works prosperity, industry, and wealth," and that, aside from moral considerations, Great Britain had a large, direct pecuniary and commercial interest in the liberty, civilization, and wealth of every people and every nation of the globe.

"To evangelize has more than a moral and religious import—it comes back to temporal relations. Wherever a nation that is crushed, cramped, degraded under despotism is struggling to be free, you, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Paisley, all have an interest that that nation should be free."<sup>1</sup>

England's great thought was consumers. There are no more continents to be discovered. Great Britain's policy should be to improve the old markets, civilizing the world in order to get a better class of purchasers.

"If you were to press Italy down again under the feet of despotism, Italy, discouraged, could draw but very few supplies from you. But give her liberty,

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 521.

kindle schools throughout her valleys, spur her industry, make treaties with her by which she can exchange her wine, her oil, and her silk for your manufactured goods; and for every effort you make in that direction there will come back profit to you by increased traffic with her." ' [Loud applause.]

Following the words, "If the South should be rendered independent," there came a perfect war of cheering and hisses; half the audience rose to their feet, shouting and making a perfect bedlam. Mr. Beecher remained quiet and silent until peace was restored, and then said: "Well, you have had your turn, now let me have mine again. [Loud applause and laughter.] It is a little inconvenient to talk against the wind, but, after all, if you will just keep good natured, I am not going to lose my temper; will you watch yours? Besides all that, it rests me, and gives me a chance, you know, to get my breath. [Applause and hisses.] And I think that the bark of those men is worse than their bite. They do not mean any harm; they do not know any better."\* [Loud laughter, applause, and continued uproar.]

Words sometimes have been called half battles. Mr. Beecher spoke at Liverpool with all the incidents of a battlefield, with charges and counter-charges, incessant shouting, and constant interruptions on the one side, while the orator's business was to fire his pistol-shots of sentences in every lull. Occasionally there would be a rifle-shot projected with all his vocal power, and once in a while there came a cannon-shot with a long reverberating roar.

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\* "Patriotic Addresses," p. 523. \* "Patriotic Addresses," p. 524.

There is probably no more entertaining passage at arms on the field of debate than Mr. Beecher's fight with the Liverpool mob. It was give and take, parry and thrust, shot and counter-shot, from first to last. Said a Liverpool paper: "The interruptions were incessant, while a scene prevailed the equal of which has seldom been witnessed in Liverpool. "Three cheers for Jeff Davis," was a proposal which once more met with a hearty response from a portion of the audience; and, as the admirers of the Confederate President were loath to cease their approval, Mr. Beecher composedly sat down on the low parapet of the platform and waited a calm, at the same time apologizing to the reporters for causing them to be so long detained. At one time, about a score of persons were speaking in various parts of the hall, and Mr. Beecher, as a last resource, stated that if the meeting would not hear him, he would address the reporters." <sup>1</sup>

After he had shown what poor customers the slaves and degraded whites of the South then were, and must remain, and how little Liverpool could sell such a population, a population that required none of her carpets and linens and machines and looking-glasses and pictures and engravings, a voice cried out, "We will sell them ships"; and then the reply came, "You may sell ships to a few, but what ships can you sell to two-thirds of the population of poor whites and blacks? [Applause.] A little bagging, a little linsey woolsey, a few whips and manacles, are all that you can sell for the slave. [Great applause and uproar.] This very day in the slave States of America there

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 425.



are eight millions out of twelve millions that are not, and cannot, be your customers from the very laws of trade." <sup>1</sup>

To one insulting interruption, when a voice cried out, "Go on with your subject; we know about England," he replied: "Excuse me, sir, I am the speaker, not you, and it is for me to determine what to say." [Hear, Hear.] Do you suppose that I am going to speak about America except to convince Englishmen? I am here to talk to you for the sake of ultimately carrying you with me in judgment and in thinking. [Oh! Oh!] However, as to this logic of cat-calls, it is slavery logic; I am used to it." <sup>2</sup> [Applause and cheers.]

In writing to the *Atlantic Monthly*, in January, 1864, on Mr. Beecher's embassy to England, Dr. Holmes described the Chokers, Hustlers, Burglars, with their jimmies in their pockets, fighting robbers with brass knuckles, "the whole set in a vast thief-constituency, thick as rats in sewers," as "the disputants whom the emissaries of the slave-power called upon to refute the arguments of the Brooklyn clergyman."

As Mr. Beecher finished his remarks on the commercial and manufacturing advantages accruing to Great Britain through emancipation in America, he cried out: "It is said that the South is fighting for just that independence of which I have been speaking. [Hear, Hear.] But the South is divided on that subject. [No, No.] There are twelve millions in the South. Four millions of them are asking for

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 526-527.

<sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 527.

their liberty. [No, No, hisses, Yes, applause and interruptions.] Four millions of them are asking for their liberty. [Continued interruptions and renewed applause.] Eight millions are banded together to prevent it. [No, No, hisses, and applause.] That is what they ask the world to recognize as a strike for independence. [Hear, Hear, and laughter.] Eight million white men fighting to prevent the liberty of four million black men, challenging the world. [Uproar, hisses, applause, and continued interruptions.] You cannot get over the fact; there it is, like iron, you cannot stir it. [Uproar.] They went out of the Union because slave-property was not recognized in it.”<sup>1</sup>

To the remark that England could not help sympathizing with the gallant people who were the weaker party in the American struggle, he said: “Nothing could be more generous, when a weak party stands for its own legitimate rights against imperious pride and power than to sympathize with the weak; but who ever yet sympathized with a weak thief because three constables had got hold of him? . . . I could wish so much bravery had had a better cause, and that so much self-denial had been less deluded; that that poisonous and venomous doctrine of State sovereignty might have been kept aloof; that so many gallant spirits, such as Stonewall Jackson, might still have lived. [Great applause and loud cheers, again and again renewed.] The force of these facts, historical and incontrovertible, cannot be broken except through diverting attention by an at-

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” pp. 529, 530.

tack on the North. It is stated that the North is fighting for the Union, and not for Emancipation. The North *is* fighting for Union, for that *insures* Emancipation."<sup>1</sup>

And so the fight went on. The opposition did not wear out, the uproar, interruptions, and hubbub, were indescribable. It was often but a short sentence at a time that he could interject into the *mélée*. Again and again the Chairman came to his help. At one time an individual was lifted up and carried from the room amid cheering and hisses. When the mob endeavored to prevent his reading something Mr. Lincoln had said, he cried out: "Well, you can hear it or not; it will be printed whether you hear it or hear it not." Then came loud cries of "Read, read."

When, after more than two hours of desperate fighting Mr. Beecher resumed his seat, it was the signal for an outburst of every conceivable expression of approval and disapproval. The vote of thanks, however, was carried with loud and long cheering, the Chairman declaring that he expected that the vote would be joined in by all the representatives of American slave-holders present, from the fact that they had had more instruction that night than they had apparently received during all the previous part of their lives.

Unquestionably this was one of the greatest oratorical achievements on record. The Rev. Dr. A. H. Bradford, recalls a remark made by the famous ex-pastor of the Broadway Tabernacle, of New York City, the Rev. Dr. Wm. M. Taylor, who, after describ-

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 532, 533.

ing Mr. Beecher's speeches in England during the war, and of this great tussle which he had with the mob, said, with his peculiar emphasis, "I tell you I believe there has not been such eloquence in the world since Demosthenes."<sup>1</sup>

Liverpool was doubtless the strategic point in Mr. Beecher's English campaign. His enemies felt this, and his life was seriously threatened, not only before his entrance into the hall, but afterwards. He reports that there were men in the galleries and boxes who came armed, and that some of the bold men, who were friends of the North, went up in to those boxes, and drawing their bowie-knives and pistols, said to these young bloods: "The first man that fires here will rue it." He reports that nearly all the members of the Congregational Association of England and Wales were present on the platform at this memorable meeting, and doubtless Mr. Beecher's fame as an orator was enhanced by the reports of these clerical auditors.

It had taken him an hour and a half to get partial control of the meeting, and nearly three hours' use of his voice, at its utmost strength, to get through with his speech. "I sometimes felt like a shipmaster attempting to preach on board of a ship, through a speaking trumpet, with a tornado on the sea, and mutiny among the men."<sup>2</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Campbell, who had heard some of the best speeches of Daniel O'Connell, believed that none of them was equal to Mr. Beecher's effort at the memorable Liverpool meeting. Doubtless his effec-

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<sup>1</sup>"Life," p. 352. <sup>2</sup>"Life," p. 177.

tiveness came in part from the hostility of so large a portion of his audience. Dr. Holmes thought that since Mr. Beecher's quick spirit needed to be roused by a few sharp questions, "he could almost afford to carry with him his *picadores* to sting him with sarcasms."

Dr. R. S. Storrs has said: "When Mr. Beecher was in England they made volcanoes around him on no small scale at Liverpool, at Manchester, and other places. But that fluent thought within, and that fluent eloquence of the lips, put out the volcanoes; or if they did not put them out, they made the fire shoot the other way, till the ground became too hot for the English Government to stand on if it would permit its evident sympathy for the Southern Confederacy to be formulated into law."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 81.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE AMERICAN DEMOSTHENES TRIUMPHS.

If the climax of Mr. Beecher's struggle in England was reached on the 16th of October in the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool, the climax of his triumph occurred in Exeter Hall, London, on the 20th of October, where, under the auspices of the Emancipation Society and London Committee of Correspondence on American Affairs, he addressed a meeting which densely packed that famous Hall, and where he was welcomed with long and reiterated cheers.

Mr. Benjamin Scott, the Chamberlain of the City of London, was the Chairman of this great meeting, and when in 1886 Mr. Beecher spoke in Exeter Hall again, Mr. Scott, who was still Chamberlain of the city, was asked by Mr. Beecher to occupy once more the same position. In his address, in 1863, he said of Mr. Beecher: "I honor and respect him for his manliness; he is every inch a man; he is a standard by which humanity may well measure itself."

Mr. Beecher by this time was famous. His four speeches, which had been reported in all the leading journals of the United Kingdom, had made him the talk of the clubs. As one indication, perhaps characteristically English, of his added fame, he mentions

the fact that when he first went to London and stopped at a certain inn, he was put into a little bedroom right under the rafters; when he returned from the Continent he had been somewhat talked about and they put him in a third story front-room, but on his third visit he was received by the landlord and servants in white aprons, and was bowed in and put in the second story with "a front parlor and bedroom and everything beautiful."

The tremendous strain which had been put upon his voice, especially at Liverpool, had been such that when he went to bed the night before his London address he was too hoarse to be heard aloud. He said resignedly: "Lord, Thou knowest this, let it be as Thou wilt." At the farewell breakfast given to him in London, three days later, he describes this painful experience. "I felt all day on Monday that I was come to London to speak to a public audience, but my voice was gone; and I felt as though about to be made a derision to my enemies. . . . I asked God to restore me my voice as a child would ask its father to grant it a favor. But I hoped that God would grant me His grace to enable me, if it were necessary for the cause that I should be put to open shame, to stand up as a fool before the audience. When I got up on Tuesday morning, I spoke to myself to try whether I could speak, and my voice was quite clear."

As in Edinburgh, Mr. Beecher had great difficulty in entering the hall. He was detained in the crowd on the street for some time, but at last was borne within on the shoulders of policemen. "When I got around to the back door, I felt a woman throw her arms around me—I saw that they were the arms of a

woman, and that she had me in her arms—and when I went through the door, she got through, too, and on turning around, I found that it was one of the members of my church. She had married and gone to London, and she was determined to hear that speech, and so took this way to accomplish an apparently impossible task. She grasped and held me until I got her in. I suppose that is the way a great many sinners will get into Heaven finally.”<sup>1</sup>

He began his great London address, which Mr. Justin McCarthy, himself an admirable judge of oratory, has said proved Mr. Beecher to be “the most dexterous and powerful platform speaker” he had ever heard, by disclaiming a large part of the praise bestowed upon him so lavishly by the Chamberlain of the city. He had not been one of the pioneers of the anti-slavery movement in America. That honor belonged to men like Garrison, Phillips, the Tappans, Josiah Leavitt, Gerritt Smith, and others. He said: “I cannot permit, in this fair country, the honors to be put upon me and wrested from those men who deserve them far more than I do. All I can say is this, that when I began my public life, I fell into the ranks under appropriate captains, and fought as well as I knew how, in the ranks or in command.”

After reviewing the line of his argument at Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Liverpool, and after summing up his efforts by saying that he had endeavored “to enlist against this flagitious wickedness, and the great civil war which it has

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<sup>1</sup> “Life,” p. 179.



kindled, the judgment, conscience, and interests of the British people," he added: "I have tried to show that sympathy for the South, however covered by excuses or softened by sophistry, is simply sympathy with an audacious attempt to build up a slave empire, pure and simple."

Having spoken to the English from an English point of view, he would ask them to look at this struggle from an American point of view, and to consider its moral aspects. The opposition which had been exasperated by his great victory in other cities, for his strokes had "invariably drawn blood from the hides of the Confederate sympathizers," had organized an effort to defeat the purposes of the London meeting. Lord Russell had recently declared that the moral sympathies of the English people were adverse to the South, and immense efforts were made in London to disprove this assertion. But the shilling admission-fee to Exeter Hall had eliminated many of the Southern sympathizers, although parts of the building were occupied by men who meant mischief.

Early in the meeting a hiss was started, but the hostile demonstration was not prolonged. Referring to the weakness of his voice, Mr. Beecher said: "I expect to be hoarse, and I am willing to be hoarse, if I can in any way assist to bring the mother and daughter heart to heart and hand to hand together." Later, the Southern sympathizers tried by their hisses and tumult to drown the cheers, but Mr. Beecher quietly and smilingly said: "Friends, I thank you for these interruptions; it gives me a chance to rest." This put an end to the hisses for the evening.

An eye-witness of the memorable scene says: "One of the editors of the *Star*, himself a distinguished speaker, and thoroughly acquainted with English audiences, who sat near to me, whispered in my ear: 'There are a great many here who do not cheer; there is a strong chance of a row yet, and the meeting is in just such a condition that the result will depend on the power and equanimity of the speaker.' Then I replied: 'You need not fear.' If Mr. Beecher had heard our brief whispers, he could not have more distinctly applied the remark of the editor. At that moment, although he had been interesting all along, he suddenly stepped one side from the desk upon which his notes lay, and his face gleamed like a sword leaping from a scabbard; no more hisses, no more cheers now for half an hour; the audience is magnetized—breathless."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher has reported that he had less trouble in London than anywhere else, and that, the battle having been already fought, he was able to give his London speech a more religious tone than had been previously possible in England.

In corroboration of his claim that the South had been protected in her rights by the North, and that the Government had not been oppressive to Southern interests, he quoted very effectively from the famous speech of Vice-President Stephens, who said that the South had had a majority of the Presidents and of the Judges of the Supreme Court. With much lucidity he explained how the National Government had been unable to interfere directly with slavery in

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 435.

the States, but, since slavery had lifted itself up out of its State humility, to strike the Nation's life, it became a National enemy and was no longer exempt from Governmental attack. Perhaps the destructive character of the doctrine of secession was never more vividly shown than in his description of it as "a huge revolving millstone that grinds the National life to powder; it is anarchy in velvet and National destruction clothed in soft phrases and periphrastic expressions. But we have fought with that devil, Slavery, and understand him better than you do. No people with patriotism and honor will give up territory without a struggle for it."<sup>1</sup>

Substituting the County of Kent for the State of South Carolina, and asking how English gentlemen would feel if the County of Kent should try the experiment which South Carolina was making, he injected into the English mind a clear conception of the American cause. Again, he said, that "the Mississippi, which is our Southern door and hall to come in and go out, runs right through the territory which they have tried to rend from us. The South magnanimously offered to let us use it; but what would you say if, on going home, you found a squad of gypsies seated in your hall, who refused to be ejected, saying: 'But look here, we will let you go in and out on equitable and easy terms.'"<sup>2</sup>

Referring to the cry heard all over England, "Let slavery go," he told most effectively the story of how Sir Fowell Buxton seized a mad dog by the neck and collar and held him until help could be got. "If

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 561. <sup>2</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 562.

there had been Englishmen there of the stripe of *The Times*, they would have said to Fowell Buxton, 'Let him go'; but is there one here who does not feel the moral nobleness of that man, who, rather than let the mad animal go down the street biting children, and women, and men, risked his life and prevented the dog from doing evil? Shall we allow this hell-hound of slavery, mad, mad as it is, to go biting millions in the future? We will peril life and limb and all we have first. These truths are not exaggerated—they are diminished rather than magnified in my statement; and you cannot tell how powerfully they are influencing us unless you were standing in our midst in America; you cannot understand how firm that National feeling is which God has bred in the North on this subject. It is deeper than the sea, it is firmer than the hills, it is as serene as the sky over our heads where God dwells."<sup>1</sup>

After nobly expressing the American belief that by this awful and yet glorious struggle, the North was helping the cause of the common people the world over, and that if the North failed to conquer this odious oligarchy of slavery, the cause of popular rights would suffer in every land, Mr. Beecher rose to one of those grander oratoric heights for which this London speech is distinguished. "Standing by my cradle, standing by my hearth, standing by the altar of the church, standing by all the places that mark the name and memory of heroic men who poured out their blood and lives for principle, I declare that in ten or twenty years of war, we will sacrifice every-

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 565.

thing we have for principle. If the love of popular liberty is dead in Great Britain, you will not understand us ; but if the love of liberty lives as it once lived, and has worthy successors of those renowned men that were our ancestors as well as yours, and whose examples and principles we inherit as so much seed-corn in a new and fertile land, then you will understand our firm, invincible determination—to *fight this war through*, at all hazards, and at every cost.”<sup>1</sup>

And in rebuking that hypocritical British horror of the American war, he cried out: “On what shore has not the prow of your ships dashed? What land is there with a name and people where your banner has not led your soldiers? And when the great resurrection reveillé shall sound, it will muster British soldiers from every clime and people under the whole heaven. Ah! but it is said that this is a war against your own blood. How long is it since you poured soldiers into Canada and let all your yards work night and day to avenge the taking of two men out of the *Trent*?”<sup>2</sup>

Referring to the declaration of the *London Times* that the American people were sore because they had not the moral sympathy of Great Britain, he remarked that “those who are represented in the newspapers as favorable to the South are like men who have arrows and bows strong enough to send the shafts three thousand miles; and those who feel sympathy for the North are like men who have shafts but have no bows that could shoot them far enough.” He

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 566.   <sup>2</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 568.

believed that he would have a different story to tell when he returned home.

Loud and enthusiastic cheering followed this declaration, and then, very fortunately, a voice cried out: "What about the Russians?" Mr. Beecher explained in a sportive and confidential way that New York, in treating the Russians so warmly, was only flirting with Russia, while all the time her eye was on England. He agreed with his audience that American sympathy with the oppressor of Poland was out of place. "Certainly it is," he cried, and when the shouts had entirely subsided, and a little time had been allowed for friend and foe to speculate as to his reply, he leaned forward and putting on an extremely simple expression, he said in a mild voice: "I think so, too. And now you know exactly how we felt when you were flirting with Mr. Mason at your Lord Mayor's banquet."<sup>1</sup>

It is said that the people rose with a shout that began to be applause and soon became laughter. Three groans were given for the late Lord Mayor. Dr. Holmes has said: "A cleaner and straighter 'counter' than that . . . is hardly to be found in the records of British pugilism."

Mr. Beecher followed this hit by saying: "I stand here to declare that America is the proper and natural ally of Great Britain; I declare that all sorts of alliances with Continental Nations, as against America, are monstrous, and that all flirtations of America with pandoured and whiskered foreigners are monstrous, and that, in the great conflicts of the future, when

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 436.

civilization is to be extended, when commerce is to be free around the globe, and to carry with it religion and civilization, then two flags should be flying from every man-of-war and every ship, and they should be the flag with the cross of St. George, and the flag with the stars of promise and of hope."<sup>1</sup>

At the close of this great address, in some respects the most effective and noblest of all his English speeches, the resolution of cordial thanks, offered by Professor Newman, and seconded, with earnest words, by Rev. Newman Hall and Mr. George Thompson, was carried amidst loud cheers, while only three hands were held up against it.

And so ended the public campaign in England. What Mr. Beecher had hoped to accomplish had been brought about, and the immense opposition had only augmented his triumphs "The idea of raising lecturers to go through England, and turn the common people away from the North and toward the South, was now abandoned. The enthusiasm of the whole country now ran strongly in the other direction."<sup>2</sup>

A prominent English paper is quoted in the "Biography" as saying that "before he left England he had thoroughly gained the sympathies of the people for the cause of the North, and he had no small share in averting a collision, which at one period of the Civil War threatened ominously between this country and the United States." And prominent New York journals claimed that, from the whole tone of the British press, it was evident that Mr. Beecher

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 570.

<sup>2</sup> From Mr. Beecher's Reminiscences in "Life," p. 180.

had hastened a complete revolution of the popular feeling of the Kingdom in favor of the National cause, and that his English speeches had done more for that cause in England and Scotland than all else that had been said and written.

Dr. Lyman Abbott has truthfully characterized the English speeches as the greatest oratorical work of Mr. Beecher's life, and he thinks the only parallel in public effect was that produced by the orations of Demosthenes against Philip of Macedon.

It is safe to say that no other American then living could have accomplished what Mr. Beecher did, and it is doubtful if any man of this century has been gifted with powers of public speech so various, resourceful, morally noble and impressive, and permanently effective, as those upon which Mr. Beecher drew to the utmost in this heroic and historical campaign.

All the forces which may be called hereditary, and all those acquired by severe study, widened by vast experience, and sharpened and made ready by long years of constant practice, were brought into imperial and sudden requisition.

Can we not almost hear the stroke of the blacksmith's hammer with which his grandfather pounded the old anvil as we mark the orator's sledge-hammer strokes against the English mobs? The mastery of speech inherited, in part from his lion-hearted father, which was developed by his youthful readings of Shakespeare and Milton and Burke in the old Amherst days, and was perfected by nearly thirty years of incessant practice from pulpit and platform, had been put to the best use and grandest illustration in



defending the good old cause which Milton had championed, in the land where the poet-Puritan lived and died.

All the traditions and glories of British freedom, from the days when Stephen Langton headed the Barons at Runnymede down to the time when the youthful Samuel Adams defended before an English Governor the right of resisting oppression; all the Christian sentiments and convictions which in noblest natures have proved a shield to protect and save the weak and wronged; all the fiery patriotism which surged in the hearts of a great people, struggling for existence and National honor, and blazing forth amid the carnage of Shiloh and Gettysburg, lived and glowed in this great son of the Puritans whom God raised up to plead before England in behalf of struggling America, for all that made both nations noble and glorious.

Mr. J. L. Cunningham, of Dundee, Scotland, writes that one great result which came out of Mr. Beecher's visit to Great Britain, was that "the Nation, as a Nation, was so roused up to stand by the North in their momentous struggle that the Government, which were being wrought upon by Louis Napoleon to recognize the South, were compelled to remain neutral."<sup>1</sup>

What Mr. Beecher wrought by his "logic and his love" has been frequently and eloquently told by Rev. Newman Hall.

A series of farewell breakfasts in London, Manchester, and Liverpool followed these historic ad-

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 368.

dresses. The speeches which Mr. Beecher made were as admirable as some of his famous public orations, and, since he was forced to answer many questions put by shrewd men, the intellectual ordeal he found much more severe than the physical exhaustion of the night speeches.

In the address adopted by two or three hundred gentlemen, mostly ministers of different denominations who met Mr. Beecher at breakfast in London on the 23d of October, it was said of him that "it is known to us that even those who are opposed to war under all circumstances, frankly acknowledged that the tendency of Mr. Beecher's speeches in Glasgow, in Manchester, in Edinburgh, in Liverpool, and pre-eminently in London, has been to produce in the highest degree international good will. He has sought not to irritate but to convince: he has administered rebuke with mingled fidelity and affection; he has been courteous without servility, he has met passion with patience, prejudice with reason, and blind hostility with glowing charity; he has cast the seed of truth amid the howling tempest with a clear eye and steady hand."<sup>1</sup>

In the address which he made at this farewell breakfast he said: "I go home not for the first time believing in a special Providence, but to be once more a witness to my people of the preciousness and truth of the doctrine 'God is present with us.'" In the address made to him at the farewell breakfast given to him in Liverpool, October 30th, the Chairman congratulated Mr. Beecher on the great success of his mis-

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<sup>1</sup> *Patriotic Addresses,*" p. 575.

sion: "You have had large and influential meetings in other great towns and cities; and, sir, you have fought with beasts at Ephesus, but even here, the closing scenes must have convinced you how impotent were the bellowings and howlings, the occasional bleatings and cacklings, of the Southern hirelings to stifle the voice of Liverpool for freedom." In his reply, Mr. Beecher said that he had no idea how his efforts would be received in America, "I think it likely that many papers, that have never been ardent admirers of mine, will find great fault with my statements, will controvert my facts, will traverse my reasonings. I do not know but that men will say that I have conceded too much, and that, melting under the influence of England, I have not been as sturdy in my blows here as I was in my own land."<sup>1</sup>

Similar criticism was made twenty years later of another American minister to England, James Russell Lowell, one of the sturdiest as well as the most cultured of Americans, who continued the work of international pacification so happily begun by Mr. Beecher.

In his final words he said: "You have made yourselves so kind to me that my heart clings to you; I leave not strangers any longer, I leave friends behind. I shall probably never, at my time of life—I am now fifty years of age, and at that time men seldom make great changes,—I shall probably see England no more, but I shall never cease to see her; I shall never speak any more here, but I shall never cease to be heard in England as long as I live. Three thousand miles is

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<sup>1</sup>"Patriotic Addresses," p. 627.

not as wide now as your hand; the air is one great sounding gallery. What you whisper in your closet is heard in the infinite depths of Heaven. God has given to the moral power of His Church something like His own power. What you do in your pulpits in England we hear in America, and what we do in our pulpits, you hear and feel here, and so it shall be more and more. Across the sea, that is, as it were, but a rivulet, we shall stretch out our hands of greeting to you, and speak words of peace and fraternal love. Let us not fail to hear 'Amen' and your responsive greeting whenever we call to you in fraternal love for liberty, for religion, for the Church of God. Farewell."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 639.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE GREAT WAR DRAMA ENDED.

MR. BEECHER returned home in November, conscious that, while in England, he had used every single faculty and every particle of his strength for the service of his imperiled country. He declared that he had worked for America with the concentrated essence of his very being.

On the eve of his departure for England, in a familiar lecture to his people, on May 7th, he had spoken freely of the prospect of death and of his feelings that seemed to him at times indications of approaching dissolution. While in England he expected to die; he did not believe that he should get through his campaign. "I thought at times that I should certainly break a blood-vessel or have apoplexy. I did not care; I was as willing to die as ever I was, when hungry and thirsty, to take refreshment, if I might die for my country."

He was sick during the long voyage home. The ship on which he came was loaded down with military stores destined for the Bermudas, and was full of bitter partisans of the South. But the man who had made English partisanship of the South unavailing was lying ill in his cabin. At Halifax he had a

telegram from his wife which seemed like a vision to one who had been shut up so long in darkness and suffering.

He arrived in Boston Saturday night, and landed on Sunday about four o'clock in the morning. A custom-house officer said to him: "If you had come in on a week-day, we were to have given you a reception that would have made things hum." He returned to America with an immense increase of popularity and with far kindlier feelings on the part of Mr. Lincoln and his Cabinet. The Administration in Washington no longer misinterpreted the severe and constant criticisms of 1862 as a mark of hostile feeling. Confidential relations were established between Mr. Lincoln and himself, and letters passed to and fro, and more than once the greatest of American orators held conference at Washington with the greatest of American statesmen.

Two grand receptions were given him on his return, one in the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, and the other in the Academy of Music, New York. An admission fee of one dollar for the benefit of the Sanitary Committee did not prevent the Brooklyn people from crowding the building on this memorable occasion with an enthusiastic throng. Dr. Storrs was the presiding officer, and eloquently expressed the grateful feeling of America for Mr. Beecher's services in informing the mind of the great middle-class of Englishmen so "that the war-ships framed by Confederate malice and commercial cupidity to harass our commerce, to break our blockades, or desolate our cities were not to be left to steal out to sea from any loose interpretation of the law, but were to be kept chained

to the docks and held there by the strong arm of the Government."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher put no immoderate estimate on his services in England, but he believed that his effort was timely, and that Grant's victory at Vicksburg and Lee's defeat at Gettysburg had helped prepare England to listen to his statements. It was his good fortune to shake down the fruit which others had ripened.

Mr. N. D. Pratt, in his reminiscences, writes this description of the scene in New York, when the citizens of the American metropolis gave Mr. Beecher their great welcome: "The Academy was crowded from pit to dome; the aisles and platform were full; scores of distinguished men were present. Mr. Beecher came in at eight o'clock. His entrance was the signal for applause and cheers; the audience rising to their feet to greet him. He stood motionless for five minutes, apparently unmoved, and finally an opportunity was given him to speak. He then told of his experiences abroad; told in his modest way what he had endeavored to do for his country, and although the hero of the occasion and the recipient of all the honors and applause of which any man might be proud and which one could never forget, he spoke modestly, in a most unassuming manner, and told only of his earnest efforts to serve the country he loved so well and to place her rightly before England."

One of the most interesting experiences of Mr. Beecher's life rose out of the warm friendship that had sprung up between Mr. Stanton, Secretary of

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," pp. 437, 438.

War, and himself. Hearing that the great Secretary, who, like Carnot, organized victory, was sick and despondent, and that even his "Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear the weight of mightiest monarchies," were breaking down under the enormous burdens of the war, Mr. Beecher wrote him an impulsive, cordial, tender, sympathetic letter, which greatly touched Stanton's heart. "Often and often," wrote Stanton, in reply, "in the dark hours, you have come to me, and I have longed to hear your voice, feeling that above all other men you could cheer, strengthen, quiet, and uplift me in this great battle, where, by God's Providence, it has fallen upon me to hold a part and perform a duty beyond my own strength."<sup>1</sup>

After the surrender of Charleston, in 1865, the Secretary wrote Mr. Beecher, in reply to a letter from him: "Your idea of raising the flag over a colored school and making our banner the banner of civilization is indeed a noble one and heartily my feelings respond to your suggestion." When it was decided, later, to celebrate the fall of Fort Sumter by raising once more the National flag over its walls, on the 14th of April, 1865, Mr. Beecher was invited by the Secretary of War to pronounce the public address on that great occasion. During the last week of the decisive struggle around Richmond, Mr. Stanton communicated by telegraph with Mr. Beecher after every important movement. Some idea of the immense excitement and elevation of popular feeling during those fateful days may be gathered from an incident in Plymouth Church on Sunday, April 2, when, after

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 448.



the sermon, a telegram from Stanton was handed to Mr. Beecher. The silent reading of it illumined his face and made the congregation expectant. Asking the thousands present to turn to "America," he read the dispatch which announced important victories for the Union armies after three days hard fighting. The noble hymn was sung with streaming eyes and all the trumpet-stops of the great organ, drawn out to the full, could not drown the voices of solemn praise. It is said that more than one strong man, when the hymn was ended, dropped into his seat sobbing with thankfulness.

The steamer *Arago* sailed from New York for Charleston on the 8th of April, having on board not only Mr. Beecher but also the pioneer of American Abolitionists—William Lloyd Garrison, Rev. Dr. Storrs, of Brooklyn, General Anderson, Judge Kelly, of Philadelphia, Senator Wilson, Gen. John A. Dix, Rev. Samuel Scoville (son-in-law of Mr. Beecher), General Doubleday, Mr. George Thompson, and many others. The next day General Lee surrendered to Grant, but not until the *Arago* arrived at the harbor of Charleston was the great news communicated to them from another ship. "The wild outcry, the strange caprices and exultations of that moment, they never will forget who were present. We were far off from the scene of war; we saw no signs nor tokens; it was as if the heavens had imparted it to us; but, Oh! what gladness, what ecstasy there was in that news no one can know but those who had suffered as we had suffered."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 451.

On the 14th of April, the hand of Major-General Anderson raised, on the broken walls of Sumter, the same flag which had been lowered four years before, on the 14th of April, 1861. The flag was saluted by a hundred guns from Fort Sumter and by a National salute from every fort and rebel battery that had fired on that historic citadel. "Previous to the raising of the flag, the steamer *Planter*, Captain Robert Smalls, which, it will be remembered, ran the rebel gauntlet in 1862, came to the Fort loaded down with between two and three thousand of the emancipated race of all ages and sizes. Their appearance was warmly welcomed and their joy unbounded."<sup>1</sup>

The raising of the flag was itself indefinitely more eloquent than any words that even Mr. Beecher could utter, and yet his words were among the wisest and noblest that he ever spoke. He began with a prayer that the uplifted flag might ever be crowned with honor and protected from treason. He described how the glorious banner had been shot down; how after the long night of four years, it was devoutly raised again. Rebellion had perished but the flag had not; the Nation exulted not for passions gratified but for truth victorious; the restoration of the flag meant the restoration of a vindicated Nation. The raising of the banner brought back better blessings than those of old. He recalled the memories of the fathers, and how the fathers of the men who had fired on the flag would themselves have been willing to die for it. The banner which came back to its old place was now the banner of Emancipation. Old

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<sup>1</sup> "William Lloyd Garrison," Vol. IV., pp. 141-142.

things had passed away, all things were to be made new. Society was to be reorganized on sounder foundations; the uplifted flag meant indivisible National Government; it meant that the States were not absolute sovereigns and had no right to secede; it meant that slavery was for ever gone.

In words of terrible picturesqueness he described the hideous vastness and infernal horrors of the war which had been ended, and he recited how the ruling class of the South, the aristocracy of the plantations, had deliberately, secretly, unscrupulously planned the disruption of the Nation that they might found a slave-empire—"an armed band of pestilent conspirators seeking the Northern life." He charged the whole guilt of the war upon the ambitious, educated, plotting, political leaders of the South.

In these days of restored national good-feeling, in this golden age of fraternity between the North and South, which Mr. Beecher, perhaps more than any one else, helped to usher in, some of his sentences in the Fort Sumter flag-raising speech, seem utterly unlike his general spirit. What indignation he felt, he launched at the leaders of the rebellion, but this never prevented his cherishing the warmest kindness toward the Southern people.

He said: "A day will come when God will reveal judgment and arraign at His bar these mighty miscreants; and then every orphan that their bloody game has made, and every widow that sits sorrowing, and every maimed and wounded sufferer, and every bereaved heart in all the wide regions of this land, will rise up and come before the Lord to lay upon these chief culprits of modern history their awful

testimony. And from a thousand battlefields shall rise up armies of airy witnesses, who, with the memory of their awful sufferings, shall confront these miscreants with shrieks of fierce accusation; and every pale and starved prisoner shall raise his skinny hand in judgment. Blood shall call out for vengeance and tears plead for justice, and grief shall silently beckon, and love, heart-smitten, shall wait for justice. Good men and angels will cry out, 'How long, Oh Lord, how long, wilt Thou not avenge?'

Sternly indignant as these words are, Mr. Beecher rises at once still higher in his righteous wrath against deliberate wickedness, and his words seem a strong echo of what Milton had written two hundred years before in the most magnificent passage of English prose. The orator said: "And then these guiltiest and most remorseless traitors, these high and cultured men with might and wisdom, used for the destruction of their country; these most accursed and detested of all criminals that have drenched a continent in needless blood and moved the foundations of their times with hideous crimes and cruelty, caught up in black clouds full of voices of vengeance and lurid with punishment, shall be whirled aloft and plunged downward for ever and for ever in an endless retribution; while God shall say, 'Thus shall it be to all who betray their country,' and all in heaven and upon earth will say, 'Amen.'"<sup>1</sup>

But for the misled people of the South there was not one word or trace of animosity. On the contrary, there was nothing but fraternal kindness. He believed

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," pp. 688-689.

that through the agency of the Civil War the Nation had attained its manhood; that, as a people, we had something to be proud of; that in four years we had made the advance of half a century; that an educated and moral people had been shown to be equal to all the exigences of National life; that we had proved ourselves to be of all nations the most dangerous and yet the least to be feared; that deadly doctrines had been purged away in blood; that the moral and military capacity of the black race had been proved; that, thenceforth, the industry of the Southern States was to rest on better foundations, and that, with the destruction of class-interests, a new era of prosperity would dawn on the laboring people of the South.

From that historic pulpit of broken stones on the walls of Fort Sumter, he offered most grateful thanks to the members of the National Government, to the officers and men of the army and navy, to the true and faithful citizens—men and women—who had borne up with unflinching hope in the darkest hours and covered the land with labors of love; and, above all, to the God of the fathers, he gave thanksgiving and praise, Who, from such a harvest of war, had brought forth the seed of so much liberty and peace.

He also offered to the President of the United States solemn congratulations that God had sustained his life under unparelled burdens, and permitted him to see that consummation for which he had toiled with such unselfish wisdom. Alas, the good President was never to receive this greeting. The day on which the flag was lifted on Sumter was the last day of Mr. Lincoln's conscious life.

"Oh Captain, my Captain, our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weathered every rock, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring :

But oh Heart, Heart, Heart,  
Oh the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies  
Fallen cold and dead."

After two days spent in visiting Charleston, Mr. Beecher's party proceeded to Hilton Head, and thence made an excursion on the Government steamer to Beaufort. As they were going back to the boat, after inspecting the points of interest there, the news of Mr. Lincoln's assassination darkened all their joyousness. In the midst of the silence which followed the terrible news, Mr. Beecher said: "It is time all good men were at home."

With what changed feelings did this memorable party reënter the harbor of New York! As Mr. Beecher said in his sermon in memory of Lincoln: "Did ever so many hearts in so brief a time touch two such boundless feelings? It was the uttermost of joy; it was the uttermost of sorrow—noon and midnight without a space between. The blow brought not a sharp pang. It was so terrible that at first it stunned sensibility. Citizens were like men awakened at midnight by an earthquake, and bewildered to find that everything they were accustomed to trust wavering and falling. The very earth was no longer solid."<sup>1</sup>

In closing this sermon on Lincoln he said: Four

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 704.

years ago, Oh Illinois, we took from your midst an untried man and from among the people; we return him to you a mighty conqueror. Not thine any more, but the Nation's; not ours, but the World's. Give him place, ye prairies! In the midst of this great continent his dust shall rest, a sacred altar to myriads who shall make pilgrimage to that shrine to kindle anew their zeal and patriotism. Ye winds, that move over the mighty places of the West, chant his requiem! Ye people, behold a martyr whose blood, as so many articulate words, pleads for fidelity, for law, for liberty." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 712.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.

MR. BEECHER's historic career as a reformer may now be said to have ended. Whatever services he thenceforth rendered to his country were largely those of a wise, patriotic, conservative man, sometimes mistaken, perhaps, in the timeliness of his efforts, but earnest to heal the wounds of war. Possessing no vindictiveness of spirit, and having a superabundant charity for the South, he argued for a speedy readmission of the Southern States to their old places in the Union.

President Johnson's plan of Reconstruction was fiercely antagonized by the great mass of the Republican party, who justly felt the necessity of first securing guarantees for the rights of the imperiled black man.

The proposition to make an example of Jefferson Davis appeared to Mr. Beecher ridiculous and wrong. "The war itself is the most terrific warning that could be set up, and to attempt by erecting against this lurid background the petty figure of a gallows, with a man dangling at it to heighten the effect, would be like lighting tapers when God's lightnings are flashing across the heavens to add grandeur to the storm."

In the sermon, preached October 29, 1865, he said: "There are many who desire to see the South hum-



bled. For my own part, I think it to be the great need of this Nation to save the self-respect of the South. I am very thankful that those who have been representative men in the North, in the main—Gerritt Smith, Garrison, and others such as they,—have been found pleading for leniency, and opposed to rigor and uncharitableness.”

Mr. Beecher did not favor the immediate readmission of the States without conditions. He believed that, first, the States of the South should establish for the freedman his right to labor, to hold property, his equality before the law, and his full protection, and he also took the ground that the right of suffrage should be granted him. “Without such provision much mischief will doubtless rise.”

In February, 1866, Mr. Beecher replied to Wendell Phillips’s famous lecture called “The South Victorious,” by delivering a speech called “The North Victorious.” In this lecture he said: “I rely upon reason and conscience. Churches are my Congresses, and schoolhouses my legislators. Kindness, equal reciprocal or identical interests,—these are renovating influences; and I would not wait too long for laws which, at best, are but mills which must be run by external powers.”

“My heart goes out toward my whole country. I mourn for those outcast States. The bitterness of their destruction; the wrath that has come upon them; their desolation—you know nothing of these. The sublimest monument that has ever been reared in this world to justify God’s abhorrence of cruelty and rebellion has its base as broad as fifteen States.”

Mr. Beecher had written President Johnson of his

earnest desire that the Government should not invade the true rights of the States, and also of the necessity of securing for the freedmen the kindness of Southern white men. In the autumn of 1866, Mr. Beecher wrote his famous letter to the National Convention of Soldiers and Sailors in Cleveland, which disfavored the policy of exclusion. In this letter he advocated the prompt readmission of the Southern States, and expressed the conviction that delay complicated the situation, embittered the exiled people, and made indispensable the use of the army in support of local government.

“To keep half a score of States under Federal authority, but without national ties and responsibilities; to oblige the central authority to govern half the territory of the Union by Federal civil officers and by the army, is a policy not only uncongenial to our ideas and principles, but preëminently dangerous to the spirit of our Government.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary to rehearse the arguments of this famous letter, which brought down upon its author a storm of fierce dissent. Probably in all his life Mr. Beecher was never attacked so bitterly by so many persons, whose good will he valued, as after the appearance of the Cleveland letter. He had resigned the editorship of the *New York Independent*, although he still remained a regular contributor to it. The new editor, Theodore Tilton, attacked his old friend with ferocious bitterness, and from this time Mr. Beecher felt that he could no longer be connected with that journal in any way, and therefore terminated his con-

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriotic Addresses,” p. 738.

tract with it. The public temper would not tolerate what was deemed a surrender to the South.

In a letter to Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, who had written Mr. Beecher cordially approving his course, he said: "I am very far from being a Johnson man. I am an advocate of the principles of speedy readjustment without waiting for a greater, but at present unattainable, good." Although, like many other men of the North, he had spoken high and extravagant words of praise of Mr. Johnson, he felt that now the President was the greatest obstacle to the success of his own views, and said that, if the choice ever came between a Copperhead Johnson party and Radical Republicanism, he would not for a moment hesitate to join with the Republicans. "The moral sentiment of justice, liberty and Christian progress, is with the Republican side."

What he feared most was that the Southern freedmen might be ground to powder between the very Southern South and the very Northern North. Many of his friends were apprehensive that he was going over to the enemy. Dr. Storrs wrote him on the 7th of September: "A vast number of people, who have loved and honored you for years, are really becoming to believe that you have gone over bodily. Of course, all those who know you as I do, know this to be an utter misapprehension of your position."<sup>1</sup>

Many years later Mr. Beecher said of the Cleveland letter: "I am going to send down that document to my children as one of the most glorious things I ever did in my life."

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 471

In a second letter, written September 8, 1866, he gave a fuller expression of his views, advocating a middle course between that of the President and that of Congress. He declared that the attempt to class him with men whom, all his life, he had utterly opposed, had failed. It was with a firm and pathetic assurance that the future would justify his consistency and his wisdom that he said: "I have done nothing to forfeit the good name which I have earned."

And the closing words of this letter deserve to be held in lasting remembrance. "Better days are coming. These throes of our day are labor pains. In some moments, which it pleases God to give me, I think I discern beyond the present troubles, and over the other side of the abyss in which the Nation wallows, that beautiful form of Liberty—God's dear child—whose whole beauty was never yet disclosed. I know her solemn face. That she is divine I know by her purity, by her scepter of justice, and by that atmosphere of Love that, issuing from her, as light from a star, moves with her as a royal atmosphere."<sup>1</sup>

It became apparent, as the storm of excitement subsided, that it was not his purpose to leave his party friends, and surrender the work of reconstruction to the men whom he had always distrusted, but that, within the lines of the Republican party, he and those who thought with him were to toil for the speedy restoration of the Southern States.

One incident, partly ecclesiastical and partly connected with the war and Mr. Beecher's campaign in

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<sup>1</sup> "Patriotic Addresses," p. 749.

England, deserves to be noted before the narrative of this epoch in his career is finished. It is described in the words of the Rev. Dr. J. G. Merrill, pastor of the Second Parish Church in Portland, Maine. He calls the incident the greatest event that he ever witnessed in his life. "The Congregational Council of 1865, which met in Boston, strangely enough found among its delegates sent from Great Britain men who had sympathized with the Confederacy. That such men should have been sent to the Council angered not a few of the delegates who had been in the army of the Union. Among those who felt aggrieved was Chaplain Quint, who took occasion to tell of the British bullets and blankets that he had seen in the hands of the Confederates, and of the lack of loyalty to the cause of human freedom on the part of the Churches in the mother country, which were now represented in the Council by a delegation whose recorded utterances had been far from loyal to the Union.

"The confusion and consternation occasioned by this speech can hardly be imagined. The soldier delegates were many of them glad that the sentiments which they felt, had been so vigorously uttered. Others, sensitive to the courtesies of the occasion, were greatly disturbed that the guests of the Council had been so roughly handled. Was there any man to bring order out of the confusion that ensued? The Moderator could not do it. The call came from all parts of the house: 'Beecher,' 'Beecher,' 'Henry Ward Beecher.' Mr. Beecher declined to speak. Dr. Joseph P. Thompson, of the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, came to the platform, and spoke with all

of the eloquence at his command. He accomplished nothing.

“The call was again made for Mr. Beecher. He yielded. Coming to the pulpit from behind, his whole frame was quivering with emotion. With his full voice he burst forth. ‘I have seen the time when I have wished England was damned.’ Then followed a torrent of righteous indignation, succeeded by words of conciliation, without the least compromise of patriotism, until at last he uttered this challenge: ‘We are ready to forget the past; the future is before us,—it is ours to evangelize the world, and in carrying forward this great undertaking, I am ready to grasp the hands of our English brethren, and say that America will put two men into the field where England has one, and that each American will do the work of two Englishmen!’ He was then at the very front of the platform, the English delegates directly before him. They grasped his outstretched hands; the whole congregation rose to their feet. With tears, shouts, waving of handkerchiefs, and other demonstrations of delight, they were as one man carried captive by the only man of our generation who could have, in one short address, molded into enthusiastic Christian unity a company of scholarly, ordinarily undemonstrative, men, who had become sharply divided along lines of deepest convictions and in the hours when prejudice was most profound.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From an Unpublished Letter, May 15, 1893.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### IN LABORS MORE ABUNDANT.

MR. BEECHER remained during the twenty-one years which followed the Cleveland episode a large and potent factor in American political and religious life. It cannot be said, however, with truth that his influence continually increased, with no serious interruptions, as the years went by. He was preëminently fitted for the great work that closed with the destruction of American slavery. He had great qualifications, springing largely from his broad and wholesome moral nature, for the wise and restraining guidance of the victorious North. His robust common sense kept him from making egregious mistakes during the years when financial difficulties were uppermost. Unlike Wendell Phillips, he was not swept into the greenback heresy.

But during the last twenty years of his life Mr. Beecher did not count for a supreme reformatory force in American life. Of course he always stood firm and strong for honesty and purity in national and municipal government, but having expended the immense force of his reformatory energies in that gigantic moral conflict which culminated in the Civil War, he never appeared, except in his pulpit, in all his

greatness during the years which followed the death of slavery.

As a preacher he was probably never so great, his mind was never so fertile, his wisdom, adaptation, and power in expression were never so wonderful, as in the years extending from 1865 to 1877. The evolution of his mind resulted in several important theological changes, but Mr. Beecher's efforts in theological reform, although worthy of attentive study, and doubtless to a degree useful, did not contribute largely to his general repute. He seemed hasty, careless, and extravagant.

It may be too early to estimate aright what he did as a theological reformer, but it is safe to say that his work was not all pure gold. He certainly offended many, whom a gentler and more careful treatment would have enlightened. He frequently made the mistake of contributing heat where light would have been more helpful, and he sometimes offered the illumination of scientific light where a little of his old-time heat would have proved more effective.

Mr. Beecher during the last twenty years of his life remained the foremost preacher of Christendom. Abounding in wisdom, and fertile in fancy, loving in speech, and lofty in spirit, he continued his expositions of Divine truth; but though he was unequaled as a reformer in the anti-slavery crusade, the pulpit Jupiter was no great figure in the temperance fight in America. The temperance reform, which is fundamental to all reforms, swept on without his making any supreme contributions of force and wise direction. In his two sermons, published by the National Temperance Society,—“Common Sense for Young



Men" and "Love and Liberty"—he teaches much wholesome truth, but he never entered into the temperance crusade, certainly not in his later years, with the vigor and enthusiasm which characterized the supreme efforts of his life. In temperance annals Wendell Phillips, Neal Dow, John B. Gough, Joseph Cook, Canon Farrar, Theodore L. Cuyler, Francis Murphy, and Miss Frances E. Willard are greater names than his.

He was a powerful advocate of woman-suffrage, but Mr. Beecher was not eminent, according to the splendor of his genius, in those questions of Capital and Labor which involve such vital interests. To younger Americans, Lyman Abbott, Joseph Cook, Washington Gladden, Richard T. Ely, and many besides was left the fruitful and adequate study and setting forth of that advancing revolution, which, if this Christian spirit is to rule, will substitute coöperation for competition in the industrial world. And yet, in one sermon, that on Capital and Labor, delivered on March 28, 1886, he unfolded with rare, comprehensive wisdom the fundamental Christian laws of this industrial revolution. "I speak the very heart of the Gospel when I say that Christianity in our day looks to the bottom rather than to the top."<sup>1</sup>

The last thirteen years of Mr. Beecher's life were overclouded by a great scandal which involved his character, reputation, and influence. The grandeur of his manhood, and its conspicuous defects as well, became prominent during that almost unparalleled trial. Seen at a distance of fifty years, perhaps this

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<sup>1</sup> *The Brooklyn Magazine*, April, 1886, p. 27.

much-enduring man who maintained the sweetness and integrity of his soul through that long and agonizing ordeal, will appear greater even than the pulpit orator who made the platform of Plymouth Church a turning-point in history and a starting-point for humanity's better future.

The days of the greatest prosperity for Plymouth Church were perhaps the twelve years which followed the war, and the culminating point in Mr. Beecher's career, so far as popular applause is concerned, may be said to have been the "Silver Wedding," the week of Jubilee, in October, 1872. The history of those twenty-five years included Mr. Beecher's greatest work as a reformer and the achievement of his world-wide fame and influence as a preacher. "His sermons were copied weekly by hundreds of papers throughout the world, and thus found their way to thousands upon thousands of firesides, where otherwise they would never have been known."<sup>1</sup> These sermons were translated into French, Spanish, German, and Italian, and, "from his pulpit went forth words of cheer, of hope and love, that lifted up weary hearts, that infused new life in the despairing, that shed a new light upon spirits that had lived in the darkness of sin, throughout all the civilized globe."<sup>2</sup>

Before the "Silver Wedding," Mr. Beecher had built up a happy and harmonious Church organization with nearly three thousand members, and had helped to nurse into vigorous life the three fruitful Sunday-schools—Plymouth, Bethel and Mayflower—

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<sup>1</sup> T. J. Ellinwood in the *Phonographic World*, April, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography"—Page 479.

wherein about three thousand pupils were taught and trained.

Mr. Beecher had already written his only novel—"Norwood"—a tale of village life in New England. He had been a contributor to the *New York Ledger*, and his one story was published in that paper in 1867, the owner of the paper giving him twenty-five thousand dollars for it. Mr. Beecher confesses that if it had not been for Mr. Robert Bonner, the proprietor of the *Ledger*, "Norwood" would never have been written. He was not a great reader of fiction, and was unfamiliar "with the mystery of their construction." The proposition to write a novel was almost as startling as "a request to carve a statue or build a man of-war."

But Mr. Beecher had a wide knowledge of life in New England as well as a wide understanding of human nature in general. Besides, he had a habit "of looking upon men as the children of God and heirs of immortality" so that all human life had dignity in his eyes. These considerations came to his aid and relief, and the result was a decision to write the book which his friend so strongly urged him to undertake.

"Norwood" has no plot worth mentioning. Many school-girls of to-day are able to write what is artistically a better story. But "Norwood" is filled with splendid "Beecherisms": it is starred with passages that shine with a noble and lasting beauty. It has wit and humor enough to make a great reputation for smaller men and it is immensely helpful to those who wish to know New England or to learn of the training, opinions and personal peculiarities of one

of New England's greatest sons—Henry Ward Beecher.

Before the "Silver Wedding" he had also written the first volume of his *Life of Jesus, the Christ*. He undertook this "in the hope of inspiring a deeper interest in the noble Personage of whom those matchless histories, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are the chief authentic memorials. I have endeavored to present scenes that occurred two thousand years ago as they would appear to modern eyes if the events had taken place in our day."<sup>1</sup>

Horace Greeley who had so keen and accurate a knowledge of the American common people, expressed the confident opinion that five hundred thousand copies of the book would be sold. The "scandal" which soon followed the issue of the first volume led to the suspension of the publication. But for that direful event, such were Mr. Beecher's influence and reputation at that time, the work would probably have proved as great a literary success as General Grant's *Memoirs*.

Mr. Beecher, while not equipped with the wide and special learning which Farrar, Geikie, Ederheim, and many others have brought to the elucidation of the one Supreme Life, possessed other eminent qualities for setting vividly before men the World's Redeemer. He proposed to himself not a controversial life, but such a portrayal of the Son of God as would remove the grounds for the common objections to the Gospel histories. "Writing in full sympathy with the Gospels as authentic historical

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to the "Life of Christ."

documents, and with the nature and teachings of the great Personage whom they describe, it is scarcely necessary to say that I have not attempted to show the world what Matthew and John *ought* to have heard and seen but did not; nor what things they did *not* see or hear, but in their simplicity believed they *did*. In short, I have not invented a Life of Jesus to suit the critical philosophy of the nineteenth century." <sup>1</sup>

Through all his life, whatever theological changes occurred in regard to Christian philosophy or interpretations of the Scriptures, Mr. Beecher always stood firm on the basis of historic Christianity as set forth in the Apostles' Creed. "The miraculous element," he believed, "constitutes the very nerve-system of the Gospel. To withdraw it from credence is to leave the Gospel history a mere shapeless mass of pulp."

"That Christ should be the center and active cause of such stupendous imposture, on the supposition that miracles were but deceptions, shocks the moral feeling of those even who disbelieve His divinity." <sup>2</sup>

No other of the modern biographers of Jesus has written anything more beautiful than the "Overture of Angels," the second chapter of Mr. Beecher's first volume. A score of pages might here be reproduced from this book enriched with some of the choicest spiritual thoughts in the English language. It is doubtful if Mr. Beecher's marvelous power with words and his equally wonderful insight into truth can anywhere else be seen to better advantage than in

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<sup>1</sup> Preface, p. v.    <sup>2</sup> "Life of Jesus, the Christ," pp. 9, 10.

the first volume of the "Life of Christ." The closing passage which follows the account of Christ's parabolic preaching by the Sea of Galilee, may serve as a good illustration of Mr. Beecher's great power with words.

"The Voice ceased. The crowd disappeared. The light that had sparkled along the waters and fired the distant hills went out. Twilight came on; the evening winds whispered among the rustling reeds, and the ripples gurgling upon the beach, answered them in liquid echoes. The boom of the solitary bittern came over the waters, and now and then, as darkness fell upon the lake, the call of the fishermen, at their night-toil. The crowd dispersed. The world received its own again. With darkness came forgetfulness, leaving but a faint memory of the Voice, or of its teachings, as of a wind whispering among the fickle reeds. The enthusiasm of the throng, like the last rays of the sun, died out: and their hearts, like the sea, again sent incessant desires murmuring and complaining to the shore."

In January, 1870, Mr. Beecher assumed control of the *Christian Union* and that paper achieved almost immediately an immense circulation and seemed likely to become at a bound the leading Christian journal of America. In his salutatory he said: "Believing that at heart there is in common a Divine Life in all sects, we seek to be in sympathy with them in the things that are nearest to Divine love and purity: and we shall assert in all other things—organizations, policies, philosophies—the liberty of all Churches to have their own way according to the best light of an instructed conscience, and also

we shall defend in all the utmost liberty of dissent; thus seeking for a unity of the Spirit while we shall regard without alarm a diversity of manifestations."

In 1871, Henry W. Sage, of Brooklyn, one of the leading members of the Plymouth congregation, founded the Lyman Beecher Lectureship of Preaching for the Divinity School of Yale College. Early in 1872 Mr. Beecher gave his first course of twelve lectures on this foundation. After hearing one of these lectures, Dr. Leonard Bacon said: "If I had heard such talk as that before I began to preach it would have made a better preacher of me." Many men now living remember these marvelous discourses and the delivery of them as notable events in their lives. At the close of the first course, Professors Bacon, Harris, Day, Hoppin, Fisher, and Dwight, had written to him a highly commendatory letter in which they said of these addresses: "We value them for the views which they give of eloquence in general, and of that eloquence in particular which seeks to save men by the exposition and application of the Gospel. We value them for the inspiring and stimulating effect on the hearers and the high ideals which they hold up for ministers and students for the ministry." Prof. Hoppin has called Mr. Beecher "an epoch-making man." The "Yale Lectures on Preaching" reveal the sources of this epoch-making power.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### SUNSHINE BEFORE THE STORM.

**FRESH** from all the manifold victories which he had achieved as preacher, reformer, patriot, author, lecturer, and editor, Mr. Beecher entered with his people into the joys of the "Silver-Wedding" services. There were secret sorrows eating at his heart even then. Some of his friends afterwards said that it seemed as if God was to give an unequalled trial to His servant lest in some way he should become puffed up on account of his unequalled achievements. Troubles had been brewing which he knew were liable to bring results of great seriousness to himself and his people. He carried all through that great week of jubilee a brave and thankful heart. Personal glorification he loathed. He meant to make the celebration a rehearsal of what the Lord had done through his people, of what the preaching of Jesus Christ had wrought through that great Christian family which for twenty-five years he had been gathering about him.

It is delightful to read the picturesque accounts which have been given us of that memorable week; how Monday morning, at an early prayer-meeting, words of devout thanks were spoken, and the prayerful spirit which had characterized the beginning of Plymouth Church was made gloriously evident; how



in the afternoon of Monday a great procession of children filed by the pastor's door-step, and each one cast a flower at his feet ; and how, at the close of the parade, the scholars repaired to the beautifully-decorated church and, with music by the United States Marine Band, with prayer, with singing, and with a noble address by Rev. Dr. Henry Martyn Scudder, the Children's Day was ended.

We read with interest of the morning prayer-meeting on Tuesday. It was Officers' and Teachers' Day and in the evening Mr. Bell, Mr. Elwell, Mr. Bowen, Mr. Andrew A. Smith, Dr. H. E. Morrill, and others, recalled events in the history of the three Sunday-schools.

Wednesday, or Members' Day, was the day of brotherhood, which recalled that for twenty-five years no meeting had ever been summoned to settle a quarrel in Plymouth Church. Captain Duncan spoke of the glorious revival of 1857-8, and Mr. Beecher brought to mind with affectionate gratitude the character and services of the older members, Edward Corning, "Brother Burgess," Benjamin Flanders, Captain Chase, and Mr. Atkinson. In the evening exercises there was an elaborate musical programme. Mr. Beecher gave pleasant reminiscences, and Mr. Cutter and Mr. Bowen entered carefully into the earlier and later history of the church. Among other things Mr. Bowen said : "During the late war, no Church, or congregation, or minister, did more than Plymouth Church and Mr. Beecher toward the overthrow of the rebellion, by contributions of men and money." Letters from Mr. John T. Howard, then a resident of Chicago, from Dr. Horace Bushnell, from "An Aged Member,"

and from a "Young Member," added to the interest of the happy evening.

Thursday was Historical Day. John Zundel, for more than twenty years the organist of the church, told of the great influence which Mr. Beecher had exerted in promoting good church music, and among other things he said: "Twenty-five years ago, I think God sent me from my home to Brooklyn, and I thank Him to-day that ever he sent me here. When I came here, though I was a member of the church, I knew nothing of my Saviour. When I came, though I had a belief in Heaven, I knew nothing about it in my heart. Plymouth Church to me is the thing that has made me to know my Saviour. Plymouth Church to me is the thing that opened heaven, and let me see in. And although I cannot find words to speak, this morning, I do want you all to believe that the reason I love Plymouth Church so much, and the reason I love that man so much, is because through her and through him I came to know my blessed Saviour."<sup>1</sup>

At the crowded evening service which was attended by Dr. Cuyler, Dr. Edward Beecher, Dr. Budington, and Dr. Storrs, Mr. Beecher gave the historical address from which frequent quotation has been made in this volume. And this was followed by an address of congratulation from Dr. Storrs of the Church of the Pilgrims. Mr. Beecher's words probably never eclipsed the splendid power of this memorable speech of his friend, which abounded with fire and fun, with discriminating analyses of Mr. Beecher's power, with

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<sup>1</sup>"Plymouth Church Silver Wedding," p. 57.

noble tributes to his usefulness, and with passages so full of generous feeling and exalted sentiment, that they have lived in the memories of thousands. The closing paragraphs have often been published, and critics have justly deemed them among the most remarkable sentences in the history of superb and stately eloquence. Every Life of Mr. Beecher should include the magnificent closing passage:

“At any rate, we have stood side by side in all these years and they have been wonderful and eventful years.

“ ‘Our eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,  
When he loosed the fateful lightnings of His terrible swift  
sword,  
And His truth went marching on!’

“We have differed many times, but two men so unlike never stood side by side with each other for so long a time, in more perfect harmony, without a jealousy or a jar! Though we have differed in opinion, we have never differed in feeling. We have walked to the graves of friends in company. We have sat at the table of our Lord in company. He knows, as he has said, that when other voices were loud and fierce in hostility to him, mine never joined them. When other pens wrote his name, dropping gall and venom as they wrote it, my pen never touched the paper except in honor and admiration of him. And I know that whenever I have wanted counsel or courage given me from others, he has always been ready, from the overflowing surplus of his surcharged mind, to give them to me.

“So we have stood side by side—blessed be God!—

in no spirit but of fraternal love, for that long space of twenty-five years, which began with the Right Hand of Fellowship then, and closes before you here to-night.

“I am not here, my friend, to repeat the service which then I performed. It would be superfluous. When I think of the great assemblies that have surged and thronged around this platform ; when I think of the influences that have gone out from this pulpit into all the earth, I feel that less than almost any other man on earth does he need the assurance of fellowship from any but the Son of God ! But I am here to-night for another and different service. On behalf of you who tarry, and those who have ascended from this congregation ; on behalf of Christians of every name throughout our city, who have had such joy and pride in him, and the name of whose town has, by him, been made famous in the earth ; on behalf of all our Churches now growing to be an army ; on behalf of those in every part of our land who have never seen his face or heard his voice, but who have read and loved his sermons, and been quickened and blessed by them ; on behalf of the great multitudes who have gone up from every land which his sermons have reached, never having touched his hand on earth, but waiting to greet him by and by ; I am here to-night to give him the Right Hand of Congratulation on the closing of this twenty-fifth year of his ministry, and to say : God be praised for all the work that you have done here ! God be praised for the generous gifts which He has showered upon you, and the generous use you have made of them, here and elsewhere, and everywhere in the land ! God give you many happy

and glorious years of work and joy still to come in your ministry on earth! May your soul, as the years go on, be whitened more and more, in the radiance of God's light, and in the sunshine of His love! And, when the end comes—as it will—may the gates of pearl swing inward for your entrance, before the hands of those who have gone up before you, and who now wait to welcome you thither! and then may there open to you that vast and bright Eternity—all vivid with God's love—in which an instant vision shall be perfect joy, and an immortal labor shall be your immortal rest!"

It is recorded that the eloquence of this closing passage was indescribable, and when, at the conclusion, Mr. Beecher trembling from head to foot, and with tears, arose, and placing his hand on Dr. Storrs's shoulder, kissed him upon the cheek, "the congregation sat for a moment breathless and enraptured at this simple and beautiful action. Then there broke forth from them such a burst of applause as never before was heard in an ecclesiastical edifice."

Rev. Dr. Budington was introduced to make the closing address, but with perfect good taste excused himself saying: "I am satisfied that this service is concluded as only God's Spirit could conclude it, and as your hearts, beating with mine, would have it concluded." Upon this Mr. Beecher said: "We will sing then, 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul,' the sweetest hymn that ever was written in the English language, the deepest, the most imploring, and the most comforting." He well knew what it was to hide on the bosom of his Saviour, and perhaps he also knew that the tempest was very near and that the billows of sorrow would soon engulf him.

Friday, October 11th, was the closing day. At the morning meeting, Rev. Lyman Abbott offered prayer and remarks were made by Dr. Edward Beecher, Maj. J. B. Merwin, and Rossiter W. Raymond. There is something pathetic, when we remember what was soon to follow in one sentence of Mr. Raymond's address. "It affords me pleasure to rise and bear testimony to this crowning beauty of Plymouth Church, the way in which her members stand by one another in times of trouble. It does not hurt the music of this jubilee week to have a little minor chord in it: and I feel as though it was my right and privilege to contribute this one element." And Mr. Beecher seems almost prophetic: "We are not far from home. We have but little time left. Heaven is real. Christ is real. God is real. Take heart, brethren. Lift up stalwart shoulders under your burdens, and go out again to face temptation, and to overcome it. It is but a little while before we will turn, as the brethren who have gone before us have turned, and look over all the way in which God hath led us, and then lift up our songs of rejoicing, which shall begin and never cease."

The concluding evening service was signaled by the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Among other things Mr. Beecher said: "Although I was a child of Christian parents, and had been taught in a certain way to respect Christ, it was long after I had become a member of the Church, long after I had finished my college course, and two years, I think it must have been, after I entered the theological seminary, that I found Christ. He dawned upon me as a

star; but it was such a star as one beholds on a stormy sea, in a cloudy night. Taking observations I caught it, though it was hid: and it guided me."

Dr. Edward Beecher and Dr. William M. Taylor, of the Broadway Tabernacle, spoke tenderly of what Christ had been to them. Rev. Charles M. Morton, of the Bethel, Capt. C. C. Duncan, and Rev. Lyman Abbott told of what Christ had wrought in their lives. Mr. Beecher administered the Communion to two thousand believers, and, in closing the service, he said among other things, in speaking of the influence of the memorable week: "You will cleanse your hearts more entirely of every form of uncharitableness, and unkindness and animosity; you will yourselves be disposed, more than ever, to bear one another's burdens." "Let us not forget how large a part of the world lies a wilderness, without an occupant who knows Christ; and let our prayers go up, without ceasing, that God will send forth into all the earth those same benign influences which have redeemed us."

The closing hymn:—

"When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of Glory died,"

lifted all hearts to the Supreme Sufferer, Whose divine, amazing love had been the constraining and illuminating power in the twenty-five years of Mr. Beecher's almost matchless ministry.

As the thousands passed out of Plymouth Church that night they little realized, or even dreamed, that they had been looking upon one who was soon to have his Gethsemane and his Calvary.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE LONG DARKNESS.

WHILE the next generation will not care to possess any full knowledge of the details, which are still fresh in many minds, of the events about to be narrated, the world will long be eager to know how Mr. Beecher bore himself on the "Cross of Slander," and what were the final estimates of the fair-minded with regard to his innocency.

It is very humiliating for the friends of so great a man to find him in such company as the student of this part of his career discovers about him. It is almost equally humiliating to see how Mr. Beecher's noble qualities, carried to excess, were indirectly the means of bringing excruciating sorrow upon him and wide-wasting suffering upon millions besides. It is almost sickening to learn that one who had rendered the Church and humanity such services should have his name so intimately associated with a scandal which for years occupied the attention of the world, and did much to lower the moral tone of many innocent households.

The late Dr. Peabody, of Harvard University, has intimated that even an archangel's plumes would have been scorched in the company and situations in which Mr. Beecher was led to place himself. That so



good a man should have been so humiliated is a mystery. But that any man should have endured the fires which surrounded Mr. Beecher and have come forth so radiant, so pure, so self-respecting, and so widely trusted and beloved, is a moral miracle, the parallel of which it would be difficult to find.

Good men of characteristics different from Mr. Beecher's might never have been involved so seriously in the complications which cast a shadow over his good name, but probably no other minister in America could have lived and maintained his great position and influence after having passed through such a scandal. In giving a rapid account of this part of Mr. Beecher's life, Joseph Cook calls attention to these facts: "His chief accusers were wretches or weather-vanes beneath contempt. They have dropped from public sight. He went through a series of trials and came out, on the whole, victoriously. He was tried by his Church and acquitted. He was tried by a court, and acquitted by a divided jury; and of the three of the twelve jurymen who voted against him, two had voted on both sides. He was tried, or was threatened with a trial, in another court; but the prosecutor withdrew from the trial when Mr. Beecher faced him. His case was examined into by a renowned Council which unanimously pronounced entire confidence in him."<sup>1</sup>

Theodore Tilton, the principal accuser of Mr. Beecher, was a member of Plymouth Church, as was also Mrs. Tilton. This brilliant egotist claimed that he owed almost everything to Mr. Beecher. "You

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<sup>1</sup>"Boston Monday Lectures," 1888, p. 146.

were my minister, teacher, father, brother, friend, companion. The debt I owe you I can never repay."

Through Mr. Beecher's friendly influence Tilton became, in 1861, assistant editor of *The Independent*. In 1863 Tilton was given the entire editorial supervision of that paper. In 1865 he became editor-in-chief, while Mr. Beecher remained a contributor of *Star* articles. In 1866, after the famous Cleveland letters, Tilton's attacks upon his old friend were so violent that Mr. Beecher withdrew from any connection with *The Independent*.

Tilton soon began to display his almost unparalleled conceit, and at the same time to ventilate his extremely advanced ideas on religious, social, and other topics. In 1869, *The Christian Union* was organized and the following year Mr. Beecher took control of this paper. In December, 1870, the owner of *The Independent* dismissed Tilton from the editorship of that paper which had suffered greatly from the withdrawal of Mr. Beecher and the immense prosperity of *The Christian Union*. Tilton believed that his dismissal was due to the hostile influence of Mr. Beecher. Many stories of Tilton's bad life were poured into the ears of the proprietor of *The Independent*. Out of the business troubles, here faintly indicated, came what has been called the "Conspiracy," the purpose of which was to ruin the pastor of Plymouth Church.

Tilton, by his follies, had become "bankrupt in reputation, in occupation, and in resources." "Finding his own morality impeached, he adopted the peculiar defense of darkly insinuating that Mr. Beecher was open to suspicion, and finally formed a

determination to drive him from his pulpit and from the city by means of an accusation of some vaguely defined offense to Mr. Tilton's own family."

Mr. Beecher was a familiar visitor at the Tilton household, and in July, 1870, when Mrs. Tilton was sick, he made his last visit to her before grave troubles broke out in the family. In December, 1870, Mr. Beecher became aware of Mrs. Tilton's great suffering on account of the ill treatment of her husband. After an interview with Mrs. Tilton, Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher expressed her extreme indignation toward Tilton, and declared that "no consideration on earth would induce her to remain an hour with a man who had treated her with a hundredth part of such insult and cruelty." Mr. Beecher strongly inclined to his wife's view with regard to the proper steps to be taken. That view favored a separation between Mr. and Mrs. Tilton, and he sent word to that effect through his wife. Mr. Beecher did not know at that time that Mr. Tilton had already extorted from his wife a confession of excessive affection for her pastor. In December, 1870, Mr. Bowen brought to Mr. Beecher a letter from Tilton demanding Mr. Beecher's withdrawal from the pulpit and from Brooklyn. Mr. Beecher read it to Mr. Bowen and said: "This man is crazy. This is sheer insanity." Mr. Bowen asked Mr. Beecher's advice as to whether Tilton should be retained by him as a chief contributor to *The Independent* and as editor of *The Brooklyn Union* which Mr. Bowen controlled. Mr. Bowen said that he had been overwhelmed by the stories of Tilton's private life

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<sup>1</sup>"Life," pp. 52-53.

and habits. Under the provocation of Tilton's threatening letter, and with the knowledge of Tilton's domestic cruelties, Mr. Beecher strongly advised a severance of Mr. Bowen's connection with Tilton. Mr. Beecher believed that his advice precipitated Tilton's downfall.

Mr. Beecher became very unhappy as he thought over Tilton's disaster. He had loved him much as a man, and now he was cast forth from his important position. His home did not promise him such sympathy and strength in the time of adversity as men thus tried sadly need. Learning what Mr. Beecher had done, Tilton proceeded to extort from his wife a confession incriminating Mr. Beecher, charging him with improper proposals to her.

After learning of this false confession, Mr. Beecher went to see her immediately. She admitted its falsity and excused her conduct on the ground that she was urged to make this confession by her husband, who persuaded her that if she confessed to an improper affection for Mr. Beecher, it would be easier for him (Tilton) to confess his own misdeeds, and that this would be the beginning of a new and better life. Mr. Beecher urged her to retract this confession, promising that the retraction should not be used to injure her husband. He got a pen and paper and she wrote: "Wearied by importunity and weakened by sickness, I gave a letter inculpating my friend Henry Ward Beecher, under assurances that it would remove all difficulties between myself and my husband. That letter I now revoke. I was persuaded to it, almost forced, when I was in a weakened state of mind. I regret it and I revoke all its statements. I desire to

say explicitly that Mr. Beecher has always treated me in a manner becoming a Christian and a gentleman."

Perceiving clearly, and feeling keenly what great disasters to himself, his family, his Church, and the cause of Christianity would certainly follow a public accusation, Mr. Beecher fell into a morbid condition of mind. Plainly seeing that the charge, though utterly untrue, might lead to most ruinous results, his actions during the next four years must be explained in large part by his desire "to keep these matters out of sight."

In his distressed state of mind Mr. Francis D. Moulton, the "Mutual Friend" found him, persuaded him of Tilton's good character, pictured him as ruined in reputation, purse, and prospects, and shattered in his family, while Mr. Beecher was overflowing with prosperity. He was made to believe that Mrs. Tilton's undue affection for himself was the beginning of the trouble. This "friend" worked upon Mr. Beecher's guilelessness, generosity, and impulsiveness, and it was but natural that, under these circumstances, such a man as Henry Ward Beecher, magnanimous, over-generous, chivalrous toward others, should have blamed himself excessively. "The case, as it then appeared to my eyes, was strongly against me. My old fellow worker had been dispossessed of his eminent place and influence, and I had counseled it; his family had been well-nigh broken up, and I had advised it; his wife had long been sick and broken in health and body, and I, as I fully believed, had been the cause of all this wreck by continuing with blind heedlessness the friendship which had beguiled

her heart, and had roused her husband to a fury of jealousy, though not caused by any intentional act of mine." "I had thought myself an old stick, and I was amazed and horrified to find this morning glory twining about me."<sup>1</sup>

In these unhealthy moods of excessive condemnation, Mr. Beecher said and wrote much about himself which it was easy for unscrupulous men to turn disastrously against him, and which it is still easy for unsympathetic and unimaginative men to misinterpret.

The story of what Mr. Beecher suffered through the next four years of silence is most harrowing. It is not in the least necessary to recall the conferences, devices, arguments, and all the details of that humiliating record; Mr. Beecher's perplexities, Tilton's pecuniary troubles, his alternating between genial affection and scowling threats; his insinuations; the starting of rumors; the beginning of his efforts to poison the public mind; his eagerness to compile "statements"; the terrible accusations which made Mr. Beecher look forward to sudden death as a grateful relief; the attacks and perhaps blackmailing efforts which Mr. Beecher did not understand as such; the extorting of money through his generosity; the outbreak of the Woodhull story, and finally, in June, 1873, when he discovered that Tilton had been deceiving him right along, and was supplying the public with scandalous rumors, Mr. Beecher's publication of a card in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, boldly challenging anybody to publish any letters or give any

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<sup>1</sup> From a conversation with Prof. G. B. Willcox.

information concerning him, and stamping as false the stories and rumors that had been circulated.

In 1873, Tilton was formally charged by Plymouth Church with being the slanderer of his pastor. He replied that he had not been a member of that Church for more than four years, and, according to its rules, the Church voted to drop his name from the roll. Two neighboring and sister Churches, in disapproval of this action, called, in March, 1874, an Advisory Council. This Council did not approve of the disposal that Plymouth Church had made of Mr. Tilton's case. It also pronounced the action of the two sister Churches unwise and hasty, and furthermore expressed the opinion that Plymouth Church should not be read out of fellowship.

In June, 1874, Tilton published a statement declaring that Mr. Beecher had committed an offense against him which he forbore to name, although, changing his tactics, on July 21st, he published another statement, charging that Mr. Beecher's offense had been the gravest possible against his family. "In all the stories which he and Moulton had told to various friends at different times, and in the statements which he had prepared, and shown in confidence, the charge was always 'improper proposals,' and the emphatic assertion of his wife's innocence. Now he proposed to stake all on one cast of the dice. He would bring a suit, and if he could get no more help, he would, at least, so his vanity and Mr. Beecher's evil wishers assured him, crush Mr. Beecher."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 532.

Immediately after Tilton's June statement, Mr. Beecher asked six of the most respected men from his Church and congregation—Henry W. Sage, Augustus Storrs, Henry M. Cleveland, Horace B. Claffin, John Winslow, and S. V. White, to make a thorough examination of all the evidence in the case, and to communicate to the Executive Committee of the Church such action as they deemed right and wise.

In a letter sent to this committee Mr. Beecher said: "For four years I have borne and suffered much and I will not go a step further. I will be free. I will not walk under a rod or yoke. If any man would do me a favor, let him tell all he knows now. It is not mine to lay down the law of honor as to the use of other persons' confidential communications, but in so far as my own rights are concerned, there is not a letter nor document which I am afraid to have exhibited, and I authorize any and call upon any living person to produce and bring forth whatever writings they have from any source whatsoever."

"It is time for the sake of decency and public morals that this matter should be brought to an end. It is an open pool of corruption exhaling deadly vapors."

"For six weeks the nation has risen and sat down upon a scandal. Not a great war or rebellion could have more filled the newspapers than this question of domestic trouble, magnified a thousand-fold, and, like a sore spot in the human body, drawing to itself every morbid humor in the blood. Whoever is buried with it, it is time that this abomination be buried below all touch or power of resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 528-529.



When we remember all that followed, as well as all that which preceded this time, we cannot wonder at the more than Herculean efforts which this greatly tried and perplexed man had made to suppress the scandal. "That I have grievously erred in judgment in this perplexed case, no one is more conscious than I am. I chose the wrong path and accepted a disastrous guidance at the beginning, and have indeed traveled a rough and ragged edge in my prolonged effort to suppress this scandal which has at last spread so much disaster through the land, but I cannot admit that I erred in desiring to keep these matters out of sight. In this respect I appeal to all Christian men to judge whether almost any personal sacrifice ought not to have been made rather than to suffer the morals of an entire community, and especially of the young, to be contaminated by the filthy details and scandalous falsehoods, daily iterated and magnified, for the gratification of impure curiosity and the demoralization of every child that is old enough to read."<sup>1</sup>

The committee appointed, although beginning their sittings on the 28th of June, did not complete their report until the 28th of August. Thirty-six witnesses were summoned, most of whom appeared. Tilton presented his statement, but after a time he withdrew, not liking the cross-examination. Mrs. Tilton appeared before the committee, and most solemnly denied the charge made by her husband. The full statement which Mr. Beecher then made brought most grateful and satisfactory relief to a multitude of bereaved and sorrowing minds. It

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," pp. 518-519.

furnished a clear and rational explanation of his conduct.

Among the many letters which cheered him at this time was one from President Noah Porter, of Yale College, expressing his unabated confidence and increasing sympathy. "I have just read your statement, and am more than satisfied with it. It will be a slight thing to say that I believe it to be true. I do not read for myself, but for the world at large. I believe that it will be accepted as true by all except the sons of Belial, and those who have been committed against you in decided partisanship."<sup>1</sup>

After carefully reviewing the evidence, the committee completely exonerated Mr. Beecher from the charges made, finding nothing whatever to impair perfect confidence in his Christian character and integrity. The blame which may attach to Mr. Beecher's method of conduct in this terrible affair was also gently touched upon in the committee's report. "If this were a question of error in judgment on the part of Mr. Beecher, it would be easy to criticise, especially in the light of recent events. Any such criticism, even to the extent of regrets and censure, we are sure no man will join in more earnestly than Mr. Beecher himself."

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 532.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE SON OF THE RIGHTEOUS DELIVERED.

AT an immense meeting held in Plymouth Church on the 28th of August, 1874, a unanimous vote was passed adopting the report and conclusions of the Committee of Investigation. Mr. Beecher's hour of relief has come. For four years he had been tortured by miscreants; he had carried a burden of anxiety that would have crushed any other man. It is doubtful if any recent moral or intellectual phenomenon is more remarkable than the prodigious toil which Mr. Beecher was able to undergo while passing through his years of agony. The first volume of the "Life of Christ," the three courses of "Lectures on Preaching," at Yale in 1872-4, his editorial, platform, and pulpit work, attest his mighty force and productiveness, during these years of sorrow, silence, and anxiety.

Though the scandal caused a diminishing of his influence in nearly every direction, except with his own people and his most enthusiastic friends, his pulpit work was perhaps never so great and marvelous as in the three years following the final outbreak of the trouble. Those who were with him felt that he walked with God. It is true that he had new sorrows to bear, almost the hardest which ever

come to men—the alienation and hostility of cherished friends and brethren, the curtailment of his power for good, and every form of personal obloquy. His case was peculiar, like himself, and his name was so associated with political, personal, and theological controversies that public opinion was divided in regard to his innocence, as it had always been in regard to his wisdom. But he, himself, had “entered the harbor of peace.”

“And what was most singular was that when the Church came into an eclipse, I came out of it. I had had my time when I was dumb and opened not my mouth and was led like a sheep to slaughter. But when the terrible trouble came upon the whole Church, with its immense suffering, there came to me emancipation. God was pleased to uphold me as I walked alone and in silence, and afterwards he gave me such relief that, during the two or three years in which the Church was shrouded with anxiety, I was filled with trust and courage and was enabled all the time to lift up the Church and carry it hopefully along from Sabbath to Sabbath.”

It is probable that a volume of testimonies could be compiled from those who heard Mr. Beecher between 1874 and 1878 as to the wonderful uplifting and peace-giving power of his prayers and pulpit utterances.

He said: “I have rolled off my burden, I am in the hands of God, I am certain of salvation and safety in God, and I do not give it any lower application, but I am hidden in His pavilion, I am surrounded by His peace and I have got back through storms and

troubles to the simplicity and quiet enjoyment which belonged to me many years ago. My heart, my feeling, and my soul run very quiet, and it is the result not so much of any visible and external thing as that I am sure that I am surrounded by the hand of my God. I live in Him and He lives in me, and He gives the promised peace."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. N. D. Pratt in his reminiscences recalls that in 1877, at the close of a very successful lecture which Mr. Pratt had arranged for him, Mr. Beecher said: "You must not lose any more sleep for fear you will lose money on me." "I said, 'Mr. Beecher, I have never lost any sleep over you except once, on the day when Mr. Tilton made his sworn statement I was so anxious and troubled that I had no rest and I tossed about the livelong night. I was anxious that you should make matters entirely clear.'

"Tears came to his eyes, and he said: 'My friends were much more troubled than I was. I was in the hands of God; these things are of the past and I wish my friends were as little troubled about them now as I am.'"

Tilton and his chosen friend perceived that they must "resort to some desperate measures or surrender themselves to everlasting infamy." On July 21st, 1874, Tilton had finally made a definite charge and began action against Mr. Beecher in the Brooklyn City Court, the trial of which was opened before Judge Neilson on the 11th of January, 1875. The damages were placed at one hundred thousand dollars.

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<sup>1</sup>"Biography," p. 531.

It has been truly said that there has been no sensation like the Beecher-Tilton trial in this generation. For six exciting months it continued. The legal talent employed included among others, Morris, Beach, and Pryor, for the plaintiff, and Evarts, Porter, Tracey, Shearman, and Abbott, for the defendant. Some of the scenes of this trial are among the most extraordinary in modern annals. Although the testimony, which covers several thousand pages, added but little to what was previously well known, still the public interest was greedy and continuous. During the trial Mrs. Tilton, debarred from testifying, rose in Court and presented a document containing these words among others: "For five years past I have been the victim of circumstances most cruel and unfortunate, struggling from time to time for a place only to live honorably and truthfully. Released for some months from the will by whose power unconsciously I criminated myself again and again, I declare solemnly before you, without fear of man and by faith in God, that I am innocent of the crimes charged against me."

Through that half year of agonizing trial Mrs. Beecher was always at her husband's side, and Mr. Beecher had the same quiet look, the same unconstrained manner that belonged to him in the lecture-room or parlor. On the 24th day of June, the day when Mr. Beecher was sixty-two years of age, the case was given to the jury, and after nine days of striving to reach an agreement, they were discharged. There were three votes for the plaintiff and nine for the defendant. "We are informed on the authority of one of the jurors that several times they stood

eleven to one in the defendant's favor. Once all agreed on a verdict for the defendant when a juror unfortunately remarked that his son had wagered a large sum on a verdict for the defendant. This statement split the jury at once, and from thence on they remained three to nine until they were discharged."<sup>1</sup>

Though the jury and the public were divided over the question of Mr. Beecher's innocence, the judge and the greatest lawyers on this famous trial appear to have been of one mind. Judge Neilson became a warm, true friend of Mr. Beecher, and eight years after the trial he presided at a meeting in the Brooklyn Academy of Music, at which testimonials of respect and love were given Mr. Beecher on his seventieth birthday. Mr. William A. Beach, the leading counsel for Tilton, who was predisposed to think Mr. Beecher guilty, afterwards frequently pronounced him innocent. "I had not been four days on the trial before I was confident that he was innocent." His appearance and utterance, when he asserted his innocence on the witness-stand, were the most sublime and inspiring exhibition of the majesty of human nature that he ever beheld. He could not see how one could resist that solemn avowal. "I felt and feel now," said he, "that we were a pack of hounds trying in vain to drag down a noble man."<sup>2</sup>

Rev. Dr. Allon, of London, one of the most careful and scholarly of English preachers, who had been greatly puzzled by some of the complications in this

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 533.

<sup>2</sup> John D. Parsons, *Law Journal*, Albany, N. Y., March 19, 1887; quoted in "Patriotic Addresses," p. 151.

difficult affair, when the civil trial of Mr. Beecher began, called to him several of his best parishioners, some of whom were eminent lawyers, and they agreed that each should read most carefully every part of the case and gain an accurate understanding of the whole. After the case was ended "these experts came together, and, without discussion, gave their individual ballots; the result being unanimous that there was no evidence to sustain the charge of the plaintiff."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the simplest way out of the difficulties which surround this case is a true, full, sympathetic understanding of Mr. Beecher's remarkably frank, emotional, impulsive, generous, guileless temperament and his occasional strange and morbid moods. His sister, Mrs. Stowe, wrote to George Eliot: "My brother is hopelessly generous and confiding. His inability to believe evil is simply incredible, and so has come all this suffering. . . . I, who know his purity, honor, and delicacy, know that he has been from childhood of an ideal purity—who revered his conscience as his king, whose glory was redressing human wrongs, who spoke no slander, no, nor listened to it."

To some these words may seem to have been dictated by sisterly affection and partiality. Is it not likely that they are far nearer the truth than the interpretations of Mr. Beecher's conduct made by men whose temperament was totally different from his?

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<sup>1</sup> From Howard's sketch of Henry Ward Beecher in "Patriotic Addresses," p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," p. 478-480.



Again Mrs. Stowe wrote of him: "Never have I known a nature of such strength and such almost childlike innocence. He is of a nature so sweet and perfect that, though I have seen him thunderously indignant at moments, I never saw him fretful or irritable—a man who continually in every little act of life is thinking of others; a man that all the children of the street run after, and that every sorrowing, weak, and distressed person looks to as a natural helper. In all this long history there has been no circumstance of his relation to any woman that has not been worthy of himself—pure, delicate, and proper—and I know all sides of it and certainly should not say this if there were even a misgiving. Thank God there is none, and I can read my New Testament and feel that by all the beatitudes my brother is blessed." <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Lyman Abbott, who knew Mr. Beecher well, explains why he was so peculiarly liable to misinterpretation. "His opalescent nature, his kaleidoscopic moods, his profound intellectual and spiritual insight, his impatience of the mere mechanics and formularies of religion which are of larger moment than he realizes, because the weak need props which the strong do not need, his intensely emotional nature and his utter disregard of his own reputation, make him often an enigma to his friends and always an easy subject for the misrepresentation of envy, malice, and uncharitableness." <sup>2</sup>

It is known to-day that many of those who were

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<sup>1</sup> "Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe," p. 480.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Henry Ward Beecher," Preface, p. vii.

generally deemed firm believers in Mr. Beecher's guilt and whose unfriendliness told so powerfully against him in the public mind, have acknowledged that they were not believers in his guilt, but that they had been greatly disappointed in Mr. Beecher, whom they had formerly loved and trusted, after discovering in him such serious defects of character. But it should be remembered, when we think of Mr. Beecher's four years of silence, that he had put himself under wrong and misleading guidance; and it should be remembered also what was the peculiar character of that brilliant personage whose vanity, jealousy, and cruel selfishness he sought to control, and what were the grave and momentous interests involved. Few men have ever been tried by circumstances so singular and terrible, in the midst of such a queer lot of hyperemotional and crack-brained people.

Mr. Beecher was a wise student of human nature in general and sometimes a poor judge of human nature in particular. It can hardly be said that he made a bad choice of friends; it is more accurate to say that bad friends came to him as an infliction from a mysterious Providence. If, in 1872, Mr. Beecher had not been bound in honor to be silent, and had accepted Dr. Storrs's kindly and generous offer of service, perhaps, with the aid of that powerful and masterly friend, he might have brought even Tilton to his senses, and certainly he would have gone to his great trial with an ampler reinforcement of public confidence behind him.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A MULTITUDE OF COUNSELORS.

THE history of the noblest leaders in the Christian Church has been, in all ages, a history of hate and defamation. From the time of Origen to that of John Wesley a malignant personal element has often been commingled with the *odium theologicum* and the *odium ecclesiasticum*. Everybody remembers what Hooker eloquently wrote of Athanasius, alone against the world, when the hearts of his best friends had been stolen from him, and there appeared to be no friends left, "excepting God and death, the one the defender of his innocence, the other the finisher of his troubles." Henry Ward Beecher was surrounded by an army of friends, but the warfare which he was forced to wage for his good name and position was prolonged and stubborn.

After the summer vacation of 1875, Mr. Beecher returned to his pulpit to discover that his troubles had not ended. Doubt and hostility, in all the various forms which he had excited, appeared to be combined in a persistent attempt against him and his Church. His enemies had not given over their efforts to break him down. He said of himself: "I have not been hunted as an eagle is hunted, I have not been pursued as a lion is pursued, I have not been pursued even as wolves and foxes. I have been pursued as if I were a maggot in a rotten corpse. And do you sup-

pose that it is in human nature, through months and through years, not to feel it? But if it please God, who has enabled me to go through the desert and Red Sea, that I should go on, God is my judge that I am both willing and I am able to go on again for another five years; for I can do all things. Christ strengthens me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me never so much as now."

To those who remember accurately that time, the words of Thomas G. Shearman will scarcely seem exaggerated, certainly not in what he says of the loyalty of Mr. Beecher's friends: "Never before in the history of this country—never, indeed, in the history of the world—were such gigantic efforts put forth to crush any merely private citizen. Never was an entire Nation so absorbed in the fate of such a man. Never did such an army of devoted friends rally to his support."<sup>1</sup>

No eulogy is bright enough for the chivalrous loyalty, the enthusiasm, the self-sacrifice, the identification of their interests with his, which characterized the noble army of Mr. Beecher's friends, and especially his own people. This man had become a part of themselves. They had gone through a horror of great darkness on his account, and some of them were still in the shadow. "How many a lone woman," said President Porter, "in poverty and distress, as she read what the papers reported, has perhaps taken down the soiled and tear-spotted bundle of the Plymouth Pulpit, which had become like a song in her

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Ward Beecher "Memorial Service," p. 37.

pilgrimage, and felt that she must consign it to the fire, and give up her faith in man, and possibly all her faith in God."

On the part of many thousands, unknown to Mr. Beecher, to whom his words and example of Christian courage and self-sacrifice had been comfort and help, it was exceedingly painful that his name should be kicked like a football about the streets, placarded in places of public resort, associated with vilest insinuations. The wounds that their spirit suffered made one of the tragedies of that time.

A vast deal of trouble was occasioned to Plymouth Church by a few members who did not attend the services and who threatened to call councils if their names were dropped from the Church roll. So much annoyance, nursed and augmented by secular and religious journals, sprang from these causes that Plymouth Church, early in 1876, summoned a National Advisory Council, extending invitations to one hundred and seventy-two Churches and to twenty-eight eminent ministers who had no pastoral charge. Finding its good name called into question on account of the principles and rules which it had long followed in the regulation of its own affairs, finding itself under very trying circumstances, the Church submitted to a great Council a series of questions which covered all the points under discussion. Plymouth Church in its troubles said to over one hundred and seventy Churches, "Come and help us with your counsel," and they came, three-fourths of the Churches invited being represented. Half of the declining Churches were in the midst of revivals and could ill spare their pastors, or the pastors were pre-

vented from sickness or otherwise from going to Brooklyn.

At a Church prayer-meeting held just before the Council met, Mr. Beecher gave his people a most wise and tender address, breathing his affection for them, but full of admonition lest their personal sympathy for him in his trials should in any way deflect their intelligent judgment, and partly lest any demonstration on their part in the open meetings of the Council should exert any influence, or be supposed to exert any influence, over those who sat in judgment. He told them that their business as a Church was not to take care of him but to forward the work of the Divine Master. He said: "This Church has for years been called to go through deep waters. . . . I know that I have your love and sympathy and I know that I am prayed for by you—that suffices me; but on your part, it will be very hard for you to suffer this human feeling toward an individual to fill such a place in your hearts as that it may be said to fill your experience. You are a Church of Christ set on a hill and you cannot be hid; and your business here is to manifest Jesus Christ to the world in such a way as to win them to a nobler life."<sup>1</sup>

It was on the 15th of February, 1876, that the Advisory Council assembled in Plymouth Church. It consisted of two hundred and thirty-seven members, the largest Congregational Council ever assembled by one Church in America. It was truly national in character, its members hailing all the way from Maine to Kansas and from Albany to Washington.

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," pp. 539-540.

It represented all phases of opinion on what is known as the "personal question," from absolute faith, through all the degrees of doubt, to absolute distrust. One minister asserted that there were seventy-five members of the Council who at the beginning believed in Mr. Beecher's guilt. At the end the Convention was unanimous that he had every right to be regarded as an innocent and much-persecuted man.

The veteran of Congregationalism, one of the famous men of the Republic, Dr. Leonard Bacon, of New Haven, was chosen Moderator of the Council, and ex-Governor Dingley, of Maine, and Gen. E. N. Bates, of Springfield, Ill., were elected Assistant Moderators.

In his address of welcome Mr. Beecher said, among other things: "You come into an atmosphere of prayer. Your coming in a thousand households has been the theme of morning and evening supplication. You have been remembered before God, and in all the sessions you will be by devout men and women, by a great multitude who have power with God; and we have reason to believe that your staying here will be not alone for our benefit, but for your own spiritual edification, and that watering, you will yourself be watered. We regret that we were obliged to call you away; but we believe in the Holy Ghost; we believe in the presence of the Saviour; we believe that it is possible for God to so pour out His spirit upon you in your sessions here that you will be better qualified to go home and labor in revivals than you were even before you came here."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Proceedings of the Advisory Council," pp. 11 and 12.

No man can be said to have been the leader in this important Council, yet a few names deserve to be singled out from the rest—the Moderator, Dr. Bacon, full of energy in his seventy-fourth year, eminent for his ability and his frankness; the venerable Dr. J. M. Sturtevant, President of Illinois College; Deacon Samuel Holmes, a great giver to Western institutions; Rev. Dr. Warren, of Lewiston, Me.; Drs. Paine and Talcott, from Bangor Seminary; Judge Currier, of St. Louis; Justice Brewer, of the Supreme Court of Kansas; President Strong, of Carleton College, Minnesota; Rev. D. O. Mears, of Cambridge; Dr. Wellman, of Malden, Mass.; Dr. Edward Strong and Deacon S. P. Capen, of Boston; Dr. F. A. Noble, of New Haven; Dr. E. P. Parker, of Hartford; Rev. G. B. Willcox, of Stamford; Dr. Wolcott, of Cleveland; President Fairchild, of Oberlin. Besides these, one of the most judicious and influential minds in the Council was that of Prof. Timothy Dwight, of Yale Theological Seminary, while President Porter, of Yale College, one of the most accomplished of scholars and chivalrous of Christian gentlemen, gave time, which he could ill afford to withdraw from his work, to the deliberations of that notable meeting.

The Council remained in session nine days, and Mr. Beecher and his Church were subjected to every sort of searching examination. It is doubtful if ever in his life the moral and intellectual greatness of Mr. Beecher was more conspicuously illustrated. It was clarifying to many clouded minds to come into contact with this much misrepresented man whose name had been connected with all sorts of obloquy and whose life had been slandered by all sorts of malig-



nant innuendo. The loyalty, chivalry, great-heartedness, and unanimity of Plymouth Church were made apparent and also its determination to know all the truth about its pastor. In a most tender and eloquent address before the Council, Mr. Rossiter W. Raymond described the spirit of its members, not only their love for Mr. Beecher and enthusiasm for him, but their exaltation of duty to Christ, of purity in the Church, of self-forgetting devotion to truth, over all personal considerations, and above all, their unbounded affection toward their pastor. They had searched diligently for the worst that could be known against him. It is "because our inquiries have confirmed our knowledge of the man that we have felt it a Christian duty to be loyal to Christ in the person of His faithful and persecuted servant. Nor have we even dreamed of such a thing as retaining in a place of sacred responsibility, merely on the ground of pretense of forgiveness, one who had proved himself weak and wicked. The doctrine that a tearful criminal should be invited to continue in a position that he has shown himself absolutely unfit to fill, that his crime should be concealed, that the innocent and pure should be undeservedly exposed to intimacy with him—is a monstrous and foul absurdity which we do not believe in, and which no sane person seriously admits, and which no person now a member of this Church in good standing ever pretended to hold."<sup>1</sup>

The men who composed the Council manifested from the beginning to the end a most prayerful, devoted, and earnest spirit, the members feeling that

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<sup>1</sup>"Proceedings of the Advisory Council," p. 62.

the interests not only of Plymouth Church, but of every Christian household in the land were in their keeping. Dr. Henry M. Storrs, during the half-hour prayer-meeting before the first morning session, spoke most feelingly of the deep anxiety of his heart. As the Secretary of one of the great missionary societies, he had seen all the great boards of Christian work and all the Churches in the land crippled and rent by a foul and troublesome scandal. It was the earnest prayer of all that the Council might do something to restore peace in the American Zion.

Though the sessions were prolonged beyond expectation, and though urgent parish work was pleading for renewed labor, and many business men were sacrificing large interests by absence, nevertheless, only three out of the two hundred and thirty-seven members asked to be relieved that they might go home. The members were united in the determination to get at and bring out the whole truth, hurt where it would. Equally manifest was their independent spirit. Rumors were afloat that the body was managed by Plymouth Church and its pastor, but not only was no such effort made, but it was scrupulously avoided and discountenanced in every way. Rev. Dr. Wellman said in effect: "Beecher is the last man in the world to manage anybody. He managed the Council as the man who fell among the thieves managed the Good Samaritan who came to bind up his wounds."

Five days were given to the hearing of statements bearing on the work and practice of Plymouth Church. The questions of the letter-missive were put into the hands of six committees of seven each. The first conviction reached by the Council was that the news-

papers sometimes made mistakes. Such had been the public greed for items concerning Plymouth Church and its pastor that news had been manufactured by the wholesale, and furthermore such a combination of hostile forces had beset Plymouth Church that much of the information which came to the people had been twisted and tainted, and had Mr. Beecher attempted to correct the misstatements that had gone forth he would certainly have been in his grave long before.

The misrepresentations continued while the Council was in session. One member counted eight misstatements in a brief editorial in a New England newspaper. The members knew that mistakes, though unavoidable, were doing great mischief. Mr. Beecher had said in a Friday-night talk: "When Plymouth Church is attacked she shows her flag," but the readers of the Boston newspapers next morning saw the tremendous statement, "when Plymouth Church is attacked she shows her fangs," and great Christian journals rebuked Mr. Beecher for such intemperate language!

It was plain from the first that the committee of Plymouth Church were anxious to have the Council search as deeply and closely as possible into its affairs. The most personal, and almost impudent, questions were welcomed and frankly answered. A careful study of the men who surrounded Mr. Beecher, such men as Professor R. W. Raymond, Thomas G. Shearman, Dr. Edward Beecher, Rev. Mr. Halliday, Mr. Tilney, John T. Howard, S. V. White, Mr. Sage, Mr. Claffin, Mr. Winslow, and others, led the Council to the judgment which Dr. Wellman expressed when he

declared them to be able men, men not to be managed and men who would not have an impure pastor if they knew it.

The examination of Mr. Beecher continued through several days, and it is difficult to conceive of a more difficult testing of a man's moral temper and mental capacities than he endured. It was painful to many members of the Council, but to him it gave relief. He laid bare his heart before his brethren and they knew that, however strong and cheerful that heart had been at times, it had borne great burdens, and had been rent with more sorrows than there were daggers in the mantle of Cæsar.

Many who had been strangers to Mr. Beecher saw things in a clearer atmosphere. As one said, "We must see a man and hear him tell his own story to understand him." After one of Mr. Beecher's most searching examinations, a professor in Andover Theological Seminary who was present turned to a friend and exclaimed, "Who can think for a moment of that man being guilty?"

These, of course, were impressions merely, but impressions in the matter of character, after one has for a long time been in the presence of another, are certainly of more value than gossip and rumor and stealthy innuendo. Benjamin Franklin, one of the wisest heads ever set on American shoulders, wrote: "Truth and sincerity have a certain distinguishing natural luster about them which can never be perfectly counterfeited; they are like fire and flame that cannot be painted."

From the very constitution of Mr. Beecher's nature, as both his friends and enemies declared, he was the

weakest of all men whenever he had, in his own thought even, injured another. He resorted of necessity to excessive and exaggerated self-condemnation, something which colder and less generous natures could hardly understand any more than some men can see why the Apostle Paul should have stigmatized himself as the chief of sinners. Many people had blamed Mr. Beecher for the words of earnest reproof and indignation which he had spoken concerning two neighboring clergymen believed to be unfriendly. It was an unusual thing for Mr. Beecher to err after this fashion, but he blamed himself for his intemperate words far more than his friends did, and that, too, in a most public manner at the closing session of the Council. Conscious of committing an offense, even in a minor matter, Mr. Beecher was all weakness and self-reproach. But carrying such a burden of guilt and of infamy, as some good people imagined he carried through all those years, and as the rabble and lewd multitude would be glad to believe that he did, Mr. Beecher's nature would have been crushed into abject impotence.

Mr. R. W. Raymond, who knew Mr. Beecher intimately, said of him, "He could not dissemble; he could not give force or expression to a feeling which was not with equal force dominant within him"; and Mr. John R. Howard has written: "To prevaricate, to give a shifty, double-sensed answer, was something that in forty years of acquaintance and twenty years of close personal, literary, and business association with him as his publisher, I never knew him to do, nor do I believe that it was possible for him. He could be silent—no man more utterly so; and at

times, when pursued by questions which he did not wish to answer, he would pass into silence not only, but into an impassibility of countenance that gave no more sign of understanding or response than the face of a sphinx. When he spoke at all, in public or in private, he spoke the truth as it was given him to see the truth."

This brave frankness, this simplicity and sincerity of Mr. Beecher's nature, and the fact that he courted every possible investigation, became early apparent to the members of the Council. "I should like to know how much longer a man need be at the focus of a solar microscope, with all the sun in the heavens concentrated upon him for six months and everything that could be raked, from the North Pole to the South Pole, and round the earth forty times circuited, raked up and brought in, and be willing to have it raked up and brought in again? How much longer does a man want to have his willingness to have the truth come out vindicated? If there is any man on earth that has anything to say, that he wants to say—if there is any man on earth that has anything to say to my detriment, I here now challenge him to say it. I go further than that, if there be any angel of God, semi-prescient and omniscient, I challenge him to say aught. I go beyond that, and in the name of our common Redeemer and before Him who shall judge you and me, I challenge the truth from God Himself."

It is doubtful if any rational man, who had any sympathetic knowledge of Mr. Beecher, could have long believed that, bearing the unspeakable guilt which his enemies charged upon him, he could have

done the work which fell to his lot in the time immediately preceding the Advisory Council, in some respects the best work of his life. For two years he had faced and defied his accusers and had been full of faith and cheer while the storm of obloquy was fiercest, keeping at his work with unflagging fidelity, leading souls to Christ and gaining from wife, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and all who were nearest to his life, a redoubled trust, reverence, and affection.

The Council was soon satisfied that Mr. Beecher and Plymouth Church were afraid of no investigation and that they courted the most searching examination and that they believed that for years they had had it. Probably no other Church and minister since time began ever had all their affairs so widely talked over. It is a moral miracle that, with a score of reporters in every prayer-meeting, Plymouth Church had not been disintegrated. The evident plan of the enemies of that Church, who owned a great deal of capital in New York newspapers, had been to weary out the defenders of truth and innocency. The result, however, was to crystalize the membership in a firmer loyalty. A summer of spiritual fruitfulness had been theirs in all this winter of trouble, and the witness of God's spirit had never been wanting.

There were few things in Mr. Beecher's investigation before the Council that created a deeper impression than the words in which he spoke of his independence of human judgment and weariness of men and their sinful affairs. "I do not care—as long as God knows and my mother—how it is. I have come to about the state of mind that I do not care for you or anybody else. Well, you know that it is not so; that

I do care and I don't, and I do again and then I don't—just as I happen to feel. I am tired of you, I am tired of the world; I am tired of men that make newspapers and men that read them. I am tired of a community that has not a particle of moral reaction; I am tired of an age that will permit the newspapers to be flooded and to make themselves a common sewer of filth and scandal. I am tired of a community that can read them, and read them, and read them, without revolting. I am tired of waiting for an honest man that shall stand up at last and say: 'In the name of honor and manhood, this is outrageous.' And yet I am going to bear it, and I am going on preaching, and I am going to preach here. When I am shut up here, I do not know where I will preach; I do not believe that I shall live long after I have stopped preaching. . . . I am intrusted with the tidings of salvation to dying men, and the first wish of my heart is not my good name or my reputation, dear as they are to me for my children's sake and for the sake of my family. After all, there is a Name that is better to me than mine, there is a Name-above every other name—for my trouble has brought me very near to it and the glory of Christ. God's glory and God's delicacy and sweetness and love were never made so apparent to me as since I have felt the need of them in other folks."

The result of the Council was announced on the 24th day of February. Plymouth Church was sustained on the points in controversy, and the Council said: "We hold the pastor of this Church, as we and all others are bound to hold him, innocent of the charges reported against him until substantiated by



proof." In view of the fact that the pastor had so earnestly demanded that his accusers be brought to face him, and had invited any further investigation which the Council thought desirable, for the sake of the peace and prosperity of the Churches and to protect Plymouth Church from further vexatious proceedings, the Council advised the Church to accept and empower a commission of five members, to be selected by a committee of three, from a list of twenty eminent and judicious men, the duty of which commission should be to receive and examine all charges against the pastor which they might regard as not already tried. The commission was appointed, but no charges were preferred, although they waited a year.

The result of this historic Council was that the backbone of the opposition to Mr. Beecher was broken. It did much to bring about a quieter condition, and, though fierce discussions followed in the newspapers, it aided powerfully in bringing in the time, which so many prayed for, when, throughout the land, Ephraim did not envy Judah nor Judah vex Ephraim.

## CHAPTER XL.

### THE SHADOW LESSENING.

WHAT remains of Mr. Beecher's life does not need to be told at length. The pulpit thunderer had accomplished his best and greatest work. The suffering disciple of Christ had borne his heaviest agony. Excitement and events of no little moment were yet to follow. For ten years Mr. Beecher was to continue his many-sided labors. His name was always to be prominent before the English-speaking world. The theological changes which he underwent were to draw down upon him renewed hostility, suspicion, and distrust. Many of his strongest friends were to contemplate with bitter resentment his abandonment of the Republican party in 1884.

But his good name had been vindicated; his place in the hearts of his own people and of millions of Americans was secure. Even the changes, theological and political, which occurred in his later life, widened his large constituency. His summer in England in 1886 was to reveal how warm a place he had in the regard of many Englishmen. His courage, his kindness and all the grand elements of his character became more and more apparent as animosities died away, and the American people contemplated the brave and toilsome old age of one who had rendered incalculable services to his country.

With the close of the Advisory Council in 1876 began the last epoch in Mr. Beecher's career. Had he died six years earlier his sun would have set in greater splendor. It was not given to him, as to Lincoln, to pass away at the supreme moment of his life, but probably fifty years hence his fame will be brighter, and the estimate of his character higher, on account of the temporary eclipse which darkened his later years. He who belonged to the glorious company of the Apostles, and the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, achieved the rarer and more enduring renown which by human and Divine right belongs to the noble army of the Martyrs.

There is something pathetic in the trials of these later years. Mr. N. D. Pratt in his reminiscences, after having expressed the opinion that Mr. Beecher seemed to him "to have preached the truest Gospel, to have shown the truest Christian spirit, to have lived the best Christian life of any of the great divines or saints in any age," adds these words: "Persecuted in a manner that would have cast down any other preacher who ever lived, he endured all, and before his death, saw public opinion turn more and more toward him, public confidence restored, and friends returned by the thousands. He told me of the countless letters that came to him from every quarter, from all over the globe. To him the great sorrow of the great disaster that overtook him, was the lessening of his usefulness. He said to me once: 'I was not aware of it—but it came to me during the first years of the great sorrow, that I had been the strongest man of the Nation, and that, from influences beyond my control, I was shorn of my strength and

must live to the end of my days under a cloud. But I shall still do my duty until God takes me.'"<sup>1</sup>

Finding himself heavily in debt after the close of the trial, Mr. Beecher enlarged and prolonged his annual lecturing tours, extending them into the South and Southwest, and as far as the Pacific Coast. His generous people had raised his salary to a hundred thousand dollars during the year of the trial, thus giving the most tangible and powerful evidence of their unshaken confidence and affectionate enthusiasm, but even this had not saved him from debt in that year of enormous expenses. Mr. James B. Pond, who managed Mr. Beecher's lecturing tours for fifteen years, reports that he delivered on an average one hundred and fifty lectures a year, and that during some seasons he lectured upwards of two hundred and fifty times, besides preaching every Sunday. On one trip he delivered a course of nine lectures in San Francisco, and although his opinions on the Chinese question were sharply antagonized, it is said that the proceeds of the last lecture were four thousand two hundred dollars. <sup>2</sup>

Mr. Beecher's lecturing had always some of the aims and qualities of his preaching, but superadded to all previous motives for engaging in this kind of toil, there was, in the years immediately following the Advisory Council, an earnest purpose to regain some of his lost prestige with the American people. His friends argued that his presence and words would help to scatter the clouds wherever he went, and so it proved in New England; in the far West, and even

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<sup>1</sup> "Unpublished Reminiscences." <sup>2</sup> "Life," p 152.

in the South. After Mr. Beecher's death, his lecture-agent wrote: "Excepting only Arizona and New Mexico, there was not a State or Territory in the Union in which we had not traveled together. In sunshine and in storm; by night, by day, by every conceivable mode of travel; on steamboats and row-boats, by stage, and on the backs of mules, I had journeyed by his side. I was with him in the days of 1876-8, the time of his deepest sorrow, when he was reviled and spit upon. I saw the majestic courage with which he passed through gaping crowds at railroad stations and at the entrances of hotels and public halls—a courage I had not conceived mere humanity could possess. I have looked upon him when I felt that I would give my poor life a thousand times could that sacrifice alleviate the mental sufferings that I knew he was undergoing."

The testimonies are numerous to the patience and fortitude manifested by Mr. Beecher during these years. In 1876 he said: "I do not know the man or woman on the face of the earth for whom I cannot utter a prayer that shall be congenial with Christ's sweetest moods. I do not know one person in this Nation for whom my heart does not go out, for whom I do not feel sympathy, and for whom I would not sacrifice something, if the opportunity were given."<sup>1</sup>

"Often," says Mr. Pond, "I have seen him, on our entering a strange town, hooted at by the swarming crowd, and greeted with indecent salutations. On such occasions he would pass on, seemingly unmoved, to his hotel, and remain there until the hour for his

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<sup>1</sup> From Mr. T. J. Ellinwood's "Unpublished Reminiscences."

public appearance; then, confronted by great throngs he would lift up his voice, always for humanity and godliness. He always saw and seized his opportunity to speak to the whole great people, and when he had spoken, the assembly would linger and draw near to greet the man whom they had so lately despised. How often I have seen the public attitude change toward him in a town to which he had come but the day before. Thus he went from city to city, making advocates of all who heard or met him."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, with all his deep sorrow, there was the joy that the people were coming back to him. "On his return from lecturing tours, in his later years, when he set himself to regain lost ground and to conquer prejudice, he would relate his triumphs with the frank exultation of a boy. But none of these things made him vain or conceited."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Beecher's letters home, giving hasty sketches of his lectures in Boston, St. Paul, Madison, Louisville, Pittsburgh, and other cities, recalled the vast audiences, the great applause, the receptions at ministers' meetings, the tears, the greetings, and handshakings; the change in public sentiment, the kindness of old enemies, the affection of the people; honors from legislatures, and every token of increasing trust and love.

"I have felt, time and again, that that which I have had of trouble I have bought at a cheap rate; the trouble has been but a small price to pay for a lodgment in the hearts of the best men, the best

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<sup>1</sup> "A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas G. Shearman's Address, "A Memorial Service," p. 19.

women, and the children. I have found that those whose love is deepest and warmest represent families who look at everything in the world from the standpoint of the household—who judge of preaching, of ethics, and of methods by the relation which they bear to the bringing up of the young, and to the founding and maintaining of Christian homes. That part of the community who live in the household and honor it, I had almost said, were universally my most dear and cordial friends.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Biography,” pp. 566-567.

## CHAPTER XLL

### NEW LIGHT ON OLD PROBLEMS.

**FREED** more and more from the burden which had weighed down his heart, Mr. Beecher's mind was eagerly turned to giving a larger and fuller statement of his developing religious opinions. As a life-long student of science, he had become, with President McCosh, Professors Dana, Le Conte, and Gray, with Mivart, Wallace, and the Duke of Argyle, a convert to the theory of evolution. The adoption of this theory powerfully affected his thinking and teaching. It hastened forward certain tendencies of his mind which had long been apparent. The new views were, of course, denounced as heresies; and, beyond anything else, his famous sermon on future punishment, called "The Background of Mystery," greatly disturbed many conservative theologians.

What Mr. Beecher spoke from his pulpit came to many people in America with such a large mixture of misstatement and exaggeration that, as usual, it called forth more criticism than it deserved. If his sermons on Evolution and Religion had come to the thinking public, first of all in the pages of a book, as they finally did in 1885, the distrust and disturbance would not have been so marked and profound. The



volume on Evolution and Religion is a study of truth made, it would seem, like most of Mr. Beecher's studies, under the greatest emotional excitement. He sees things by flashes, and, though he may see further in certain directions than other men, how much that he utters appears to us distorted and inexact! At times he excites more than he instructs, but his remarkable prophetic character is apparent in its pages. Much of the time he speaks like a Hebrew seer or poet, uttering his fervent thoughts when stirred by the deepest emotions. Nothing is seen by him in the white light of pure intellect. It is rosy or rainbow light everywhere. As we read him, we seem to ourselves examining flowers, specimens, and elements in a room illuminated by many-colored windows. It is like bringing a laboratory into a Gothic cathedral. To the theological student the effects are sometimes bizarre. We feel that a most wonderful mind and heart are at work, but we also sometimes feel that we are learning quite as much of Mr. Beecher as we are of Jehovah.

In October, 1882, he resigned his membership in the Congregational Association of Ministers in New York and Brooklyn. In withdrawing from his connection with them, a step which he deemed necessary lest his brethren might feel that they were held in any measure responsible for his beliefs, he made a somewhat elaborate statement of his theological opinions. After stating his views negatively, he affirmed that he was working on the same lines and in the same direction with his teachings of more than forty-five years. As his doctrine had been widely misrepresented, he touched upon the sources of its

misrepresentation. They partly sprang from his own impetuous nature, and partly from the way in which he had been reported.

Speaking of his underlying mental philosophy and his personal experiences and the history of his early preaching, he said: "There are many things that are necessary to a system of theology that are not necessary to the conversion of men." "I have called those things fundamental which were necessary for the conviction of sin, for the conversion from sin, for the development of faith, for the dominant love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the building up of a Christlike character. That dispenses with a great many doctrines that are necessary for a theological system or for an ecclesiastical statement."<sup>1</sup>

He then, with some detail, told what he believed of the nature of God, of his acceptance of the Trinity, of his enthusiastic belief in the Divinity of Christ and in the Holy Ghost as one of the persons of the Godhead. He declared his belief in general and special providence, in the efficacy of prayer and in miracles. "I wrote in a book when I came to Brooklyn: 'I foresee there is to be a period of great unbelief; now I am determined so to preach as to lay a foundation, when the flood comes, on which men can build,' and I have thus, as it were, been laboring for the Gentiles, not for the Jews, in the general drift of my ministry."<sup>2</sup>

He announced his belief in the need of regeneration and in the inspiration of the Scriptures as set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith. "The Bible

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 493.   <sup>2</sup> "Life," p. 498.

is a record of the steps of God in revealing Himself to man. The inspiration was originally upon the generation, upon the race, and then what was gained step by step was gathered up as this says, and put into writing for the better preservation of it."

In speaking of the Atonement, he remarked: "I am accustomed to say that Christ is in Himself the Atonement. That He is set forth in His life, teaching, suffering, death, resurrection, and heavenly glory, as empowered to forgive sin and to transform men into a new and nobler life, who know Him and accept Him in full and loving trust. He is set forth as one prepared and empowered to remit the penalty of past sins, and to save them from the dominion of sin. It is not necessary to salvation that men should know how Christ was prepared to be a Saviour. It is He Himself that is to be accepted and not the philosophy of His nature or work. I employ the word Christ for that which systematic writers call the Atonement."<sup>1</sup>

In regard to future punishment he set forth his belief that "the Scriptures teach explicitly" that conduct and character in this life produce respectively beneficial or detrimental effects both in the life that now is and in that which is to come, and that a man dying is not in the same condition on the other side whether he be bad or whether he be good; but that consequences follow and go over the border. He believed that the consequences are so large and dreadful that every man ought to be deterred from venturing upon them. In regard to the continuance of punishment beyond the grave he said; "I do not

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," pp. 502-503.

think we are authorized by the Scriptures to say that it is endless in the sense in which we ordinarily employ that term."<sup>1</sup>

In a sermon preached in 1859 his view was different. He said: "I sound the depths of the other world with curious inquiries; but from it comes no echo and no answer to my questions. No analogies can grapple and bring up from the depths of the darkness of the lost world the probable truths. No philosophy has line and plummet long enough to sound the depths. There remain for us only the few and authoritative words of God. It is declared that the bliss of the righteous is everlasting. With equal directness and simplicity they declare that the doom of the wicked is everlasting."<sup>2</sup>

In a private letter which was probably one of his latest utterances on this subject Mr. Beecher's mind appears to have inclined very strongly to the theory of conditional immortality.

In closing his address before the Ministerial Association, Mr. Beecher said: "I have endeavored through stormy times, through all forms of excitement, to make known what was the nature of God and what He expected human life to be, and to bring to bear upon that one point every power and influence in me. I have nothing that I kept back, neither reason, nor wit, nor humor, nor moral sensibility, nor social affection. I have poured my whole being into the ministry with this one object—to glorify God by lifting man up out of the natural state into the pure

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 505.

<sup>2</sup> "Sermons," Harper's edition, Vol. I., p. 209.

spiritual life. I never was in warmer personal sympathy with every one of you than I am now."

Urgent efforts were made to induce him to reconsider his resignation, but his determination was unchanged. The very deep pain and regret felt by all the members at his withdrawal were expressed in a cordial resolution. They recognized the generous magnanimity of his action, though they earnestly believed that the exposition of his doctrinal views plainly indicated the propriety of his continued membership in any Association. The resolutions closed with these words: "We desire to place on record, as the result of a long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Beecher, and familiar observation of the results of his life as well as of his preaching and pastoral work, that we cherish for him an ever-growing personal attachment as a brother beloved and a deepening sense of his work as a Christian minister. We cannot now contemplate the possibility of his future absence from our meetings without a depressing sense of the loss we are to suffer, and unitedly pledge the hearts of the Association to him, and express the hope that the day of his return may soon come."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to Dr. Philip Schaff, the learned Church historian, Mr. Beecher describes his theology in 1885 as "evangelical, progressive, and anti-Calvinistic," and Dr. Schaff writes: "The redeeming trait in Henry Ward Beecher's theology, the crowning excellence of his character, the inspiration of his best words and deeds, was his simple childlike faith and burning love of Christ whom he adored as the eternal

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<sup>1</sup>"Life," p. 506.   <sup>2</sup>"Life," p. 507.

Son of God, the friend of the poor, and the Saviour of all men."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, is said to have remarked of Mr. Beecher, "Whatever fault men find with his head, his heart is right."

It can scarcely be doubted that Mr. Beecher undervalued systematic theology, although he studied it more carefully than most people have imagined. It was ever his habit to have some book of theology within his reach during his long lecture tours. The complaint that Mr. Beecher's later teaching was "substantially unbiblical in tone" is a very grave indictment which will be earnestly disputed by many. Doubtless his later theology was unduly colored by his reading of Herbert Spencer and his enthusiastic advocacy of evolutionary theories. Even his earlier preaching seemed to many unbiblical in tone, because of its originality, novelty of emphasis, and freedom from many of the conventionalities. But this is to be said, that no one has a right to estimate Mr. Beecher by any fragmentary and sporadic reading of him. Only a large acquaintance is a just acquaintance. The critic is often tempted to say that his preaching lacked this or that important element, but reading on he finds what he thought was wanting. Mr. Beecher's sermons would doubtless be more satisfactory to the student if his statements were more fully qualified and balanced here and there, but this

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> "Current Religious Perils," Boston Monday Lectures, Joseph Cook, 1886, p. 134.

was not Mr. Beecher's way, neither was it the way of Paul or of Jesus.

It is probable that Mr. Beecher did not count as a large help to evangelistic work in his later years, partly because of the doubt with which his theological position was popularly regarded, and partly because all of his energies were taxed with labors not directly evangelistic, and partly, it would seem from a lessening of some of the elements and forces in that strenuous faith which had early made him an earnest and whole-souled revivalist. It was felt by many that his mind had turned too exclusively to the gentler and more generous aspects of the Gospel, and it is probable that his championship of what he deemed theological reform diverted his soul in some measure from evangelistic effort.

Did he overvalue the new light which he had gained from evolution? In a letter written in 1886 to Mr. Alfred Rose, editor of *The Pulpit of To-day*, consenting to the publication of his sermons in pamphlet form, Mr. Beecher said: "It may be that it is a sign of advancing years that just now I am more willing to have them published than I ever was before. But, to me, it seems as if God's Kingdom was opening to me and in me more than ever before, and my heart runs deeper than ever before. I do not feel that I am a prophet, or that I am opening a new dispensation or creating a new theology, but I feel that I am a forerunner of the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on earth and that we are near the time when a great and glorious advance in religious experience will be disclosed. I have a zeal for the coming Kingdom of God. I would that I could do

more than cry, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' but I am unspeakably grateful that I can do that."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher's contributions to theological progress were doubtless considerable. What he wrote on Evolution, if appearing to-day for the first time, would excite less adverse criticism than fell on his utterances at that time. It was his misfortune, as a theological leader, partly from his temperament and partly from circumstances, to be always successful in stirring up such an amount of controversy that his theological opinions were rarely estimated at their true value. Whatever truths he may have overlooked or misunderstood, and however marked his failure to prophesy according to what may be deemed the right proportion of faith, he was a true pioneer of the larger and more Christlike Christianity of the future. Whatever his mistakes, it will be difficult to find any other man of his age who covered a larger area in the whole domain of truth than did Henry Ward Beecher.

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<sup>1</sup>From T. J. Ellinwood's "Reminiscences."



## CHAPTER XLII.

### PULPIT THUNDERER AND PLUMED KNIGHT.

MR. BEECHER's most important relations to political life in his later years were connected with the Presidential campaign of 1884, when he gave his great influence for the election of Governor Cleveland. He had spoken with unequalled power for the election of Frémont, in 1856, and Lincoln, in 1860. Plymouth Church had been thronged Sunday evenings with excited multitudes in 1864, when he plead for the reëlection of the honest and far-sighted chief magistrate whose hand on the helm of State had been so steady and strong. He had favored Grant in 1868 and 1872; had spoken for Hayes in 1876 and for Garfield in 1880. He had taken an active part in attacking the corrupt judges of New York City in 1868-9, and had worked faithfully for good government in Brooklyn.

As the questions which led to the war, and were entailed by it, had been largely settled, and settled right, Mr. Beecher's attitude toward the Republican party became more independent. As the chief differences between the leading parties of the United States had to do with the protective tariff, and Mr. Beecher was a pronounced free-trader, his alliance with the Republicans grew less firm.

*He was greatly pleased*

with the unexpected wisdom shown by Mr. Arthur in the Presidential office, and earnestly desired his nomination by the Republicans in 1884. He was grievously disappointed when the Republicans presented the name of Mr. Blaine, whom he had come to distrust. He also felt that many of those who were most prominent in supporting that brilliant but unfortunate leader, represented the corrupter elements of the Republican party. The nomination by the Democrats of Governor Cleveland, whom he had come to admire, made it possible for him to break away from his old affiliations.

Mr. N. D. Pratt, in his reminiscences, writes: "Mr. Beecher was personally opposed to Blaine, honestly believing him unfit for the Presidency. In conversation with him in April of that year he told me that if Mr. Blaine was nominated it would split the Republican party. An admirer of Mr. Blaine and a believer in him, as I was, it seemed intolerable to think of Mr. Beecher opposing him. When he was nominated, Mr. Beecher was for a long time silent. R. W. Raymond wrote me during the campaign that he thought that Mr. Beecher's purpose was to be silent and not to oppose Mr. Blaine. But injudicious friends kept after him and were not satisfied with his silence, but seemed determined to make him speak for the Republican candidate. Finally many injudiciously threatened him that if he went on the stump for Cleveland they would rake up his old trouble. This stirred the lion within him, and he took the platform for the Democratic candidate."

"As did thousands of his friends, I wrote a long letter to Mr. Beecher and besought him not to let his

friends have the bitter memory of him, perhaps in the last campaign in which he might engage, advocating the defeat of the grand old Republican party for which he had done so much in years past. Mr. Beecher heeded none of these letters, and all of us who believed in him felt that his course was certainly taken after conscientious and earnest deliberation. He was mistaken in his judgment of Mr. Blaine, and I cannot help believing that, if he had lived to witness the wise, conservative, statesmanlike course of Mr. Blaine while in charge of the State Department during the Harrison administration, he would have admitted that he had misjudged him, for no one was quicker to correct an error than Mr. Beecher."

Believing earnestly that Cleveland would make a safe and honest President, discerning in him those qualities which have given him such phenomenal success as a political leader, and believing, after honest and careful inquiry that Mr. Cleveland had been maliciously slandered as to his private life, Henry Ward Beecher entered with great zeal into the campaign. That zeal was inspired by some of the strongest feelings and bitterest memories of his life. "When in the gloomy night of my own suffering, I sounded every depth of sorrow, I vowed that if God would bring the day-star of Hope, I would never suffer brother, friend, or neighbor to go unfriended should a like serpent seek to crush him. That oath I will regard now, because I know the bitterness of venomous lies. I will stand against infamous lies which seek to sting to death an upright man and magistrate. Men counsel me to prudence lest I stir again my own griefs. No, I will not be prudent. If I refuse to in-

terpose the shield of well-placed confidence between Governor Cleveland and the swarm of liars that nuzzle in the mud or sling arrows from ambush, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and my right hand forget its cunning. I will imitate the noble example set by Plymouth Church in the day of my calamity. They were not ashamed of my bonds. They stood by me with God-sent loyalty. It was a heroic deed. They have set my duty before me and I will imitate their example."<sup>1</sup>

The campaign of 1884 was one of unparalleled personal bitterness. The friends who knew Mr. Blaine most intimately felt that the conduct of some of his opponents was an outrage on that chivalrous, patriotic, and high-minded statesman. The Hon. Nelson Dingley, Jr., has written: "The unjust and bitter criticism and personal defamation to which he was subjected in some quarters from the time it became known in 1876 that he was an aspirant for the Presidency, seemed like a burlesque to those who intimately knew Mr. Blaine, who understood the perfect purity and integrity of his private life, the nobility of his aims and purposes, and the magnanimity and kindness of his nature."<sup>2</sup>

During that acrimonious campaign of 1884, many of Mr. Beecher's truest friends regretted that, while manifesting such a noble and chivalrous sympathy for one of the maligned candidates, he had only bitter and depreciative words for the other candidate who, as they believed, was equally worthy and patriotic, and even more fiercely maligned. It seemed to

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 578. <sup>2</sup> *The Independent*, February 2, 1893.

them strange that, while Mr. Blaine was forced, after having been vindicated in the judgment of his peers, to fight for all that makes life dear and sacred, and also that, when the chief hold that his enemies had over him came from his own private letters, Mr. Beecher, with his similar past experience, appeared to have forgotten for the time both charity and magnanimity.

Since 1884, Cleveland and Blaine have risen higher and higher in the esteem of their countrymen. Political friends and foes alike applauded Mr. Blaine's grand career in the Department of State, and mourned his death as that of the most inspiring and thoroughly American leader since Lincoln. Beecher's failure to appreciate what was great and noble in Mr. Blaine is only another evidence of that poor judgment of men which sometimes had brought him into sorest personal trouble. But it should be remembered by the most ardent friends of the Plumed Knight that, however extravagant Mr. Beecher's denunciations of Mr. Blaine may have been, they were surpassed on an earlier occasion by Mr. Beecher's condemnation of himself. Some of Mr. Blaine's misfortunes, like Beecher's, arose from intimate association with unworthy friends, and it would have only been charitable in the great preacher to have remembered that when Mr. Blaine's conduct was officially investigated his brave and manly explanation was at that time generally accepted, even by bitter foes, as ample vindication.

Remembering the safe course which Mr. Cleveland has pursued, it is hard to-day to realize how deep and wide-spread was the alarm over his possible election, and how fierce was the antagonism to Mr. Beecher on the part of many of his friends in 1884.

Plymouth Church was threatened with disruption. Nearly all the members sided against their pastor. As usual in the great crises of his life, Mr. Beecher was repeatedly informed that he had ruined himself and his influence. It required all his stubborn courage, backed by a thorough conviction that he was right, to take and maintain the position which he assumed, outside of the Republican ranks. It is not too much to say that, in the even balance of voters in the State of New York, it was Mr. Beecher's influence that brought defeat to the party which included most of his warmest friends. Many of his former supporters were so indignant that they professed to believe all that his enemies had ever said against him! He went to his death unforgiven by them.

Calmer judgments will prevail. The bitterness of personal partisanship will give way to truer estimates both of the Pulpit Thunderer and of the Plumed Knight. Whatever his mistakes, his services to Liberty will keep green for ever the laurel on the grave of the one, and, standing by the tomb of the other, men will recall that, whatever his faults, he was buried, amid a Nation's proud tears, in an honored sepulchre; that he was the American who taught his countrymen to believe in themselves and their imperial destiny, and that, as the pioneer and chief promoter of commercial relations and international friendship among the peoples of the Western Hemisphere, he holds the same historic position toward the Greater America that Chatham held, more than a century ago, toward the Greater Britain.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### LAST VIEW OF THE OLD BATTLEFIELD.

It was the good fortune of Mr. Beecher, both in America and in England, to be a messenger of peace and good will as well as an apostle of righteousness. Having fought with English mobs in 1863, it was his lot twenty-four years later to know all of the delights of a royal English welcome.

It was through the urgent persuasions of Mr. James B. Pond, his lecture-agent, that Henry Ward Beecher was induced to make this final visit to "Our Old Home." Accompanied by Mrs. Beecher, he sailed in the *Etruria* on the 19th of June, 1886, and three thousand people from Plymouth Church, full of loyal enthusiasm, went down the harbor to give him a loving farewell.

For four days he suffered from his usual sickness, but on his birthday, the 24th of June, when he was seventy-three years of age, he was able to appear on deck and was showered with birthday cards and letters which had been reserved for that time.

Landing in Liverpool, he spent a quiet Sunday unrecognized in a great congregation. On the following day he heard a very powerful and luminous speech on the Home-Rule Question by Mr. Gladstone.

At the close of it he was presented to the English statesman, and, complimenting his address, he said: "I have no words to express myself in regard to its excellence." To this Mr. Gladstone replied: "Certainly you are a good judge of such efforts." Mr. Beecher was a believer in Home Rule, and, from an American standpoint, the question at issue seemed to him as simple as A B C. Earnest efforts were made to induce him to speak on the burning Irish question during the great campaign when the Grand Old Man met with such a memorable reverse, but he resolutely declined.

In London Mr. and Mrs. Beecher were the guests of Dr. and Mrs. Parker at their home in Daleham Gardens. On Thursday morning, July 1st, he attended the City Temple and heard a noble sermon on Job. At the close of the sermon, Dr. Parker presented his illustrious friend, saying: "Last week there was in England one Grand Old Man; to-day there are two of them." Mr. Beecher was received with enthusiasm. He spoke very simply and tenderly, and closed with a touching and sympathetic prayer. Mr. Beecher said, in a letter, "If I had ten times the (self) appreciation which I have, I must have been satisfied with my public reception. The great dailies announced my arrival with leading editorials of all kinds; letters pour in by the bushel. Pond received seventy on a single morning. Dr. Parker had letters for me at Queenstown, and called on me at once in London. I am to lunch with him to-day (Friday, July 2d); go to the Lord Mayor's dinner at seven; invited to Mr. Phelps's (our Minister) next Monday. On to-day week a dinner is to be given me to which



eminent men of all ranks are to come and various other attentions are preparing." <sup>1</sup>

He was pleased to learn that the second edition of his "Evolution and Religion" had been sold, and that a third was on hand. It was a happy surprise to find that he was better known in England even than America; that his sermons were more widely circulated and read, and that even the cab-drivers and boys on the street recognized his face.

Mr. Beecher's first sermon was in the City Temple, and the congregation far overpassed the seating capacity of the church. The sermon was one of great power. The newspapers were somewhat startled by its occasional quaintness of expression and more than occasional humorousness. On July 9th, a banquet was given to Mr. Beecher at the Hotel Metropole at which eighty well known Englishmen and Americans sat down. The addresses were full of enthusiasm, and Mr. Beecher's response was such as he only could make.

On July 11th, he preached for Dr. Allon, in the Union Chapel at Islington. The great church was thronged, and many were turned away. In the afternoon he attended service in Westminster Abbey by special invitation, and called upon Dean Bradley where he met a number of English clergymen. In the Jerusalem Chamber he said: "I am struck with awe. No room has greater interest for me, unless it be the 'Upper Room.'" He was entertained by Henry Irving at his home in Hammersmith, London, and he thought Mr. Irving's place "The Grange"

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<sup>1</sup> "Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," p. 19.

was the only place surpassing his own in Peekskill that he had ever seen.

The famous Dr. Clifford, editor of *The Baptist*, said of Mr. Beecher's preaching in London: "Beecher must be heard to be fairly judged. One chief charm and central inspiring force is the man. The whole soul of the man lives in his preaching. There is no vaporous rhetoric, no glittering phrase-making, no mere embroidery of speech, but overwhelming spiritual reality, a life that has been lived with God, and speaks as if from the divine presence, strong in soul-forces of unaffected goodness, unclouded faith, and the large-hearted love of men, a blending and inter-fusing of high moral and intellectual qualities, which fills you with a sense and emotion of the marvelous. As I meditated on what I heard, I constantly recalled the wealth of ideas of John Foster, the large views of Robertson, the rich fancy of Jeremy Taylor, the wit and shrewd humor of Thomas Fuller, the spirituality of Thomas à Kempis and the burning love of the Apostle John."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher preached in Bradford, Liverpool, Carlisle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Scarborough, Torquay, Brighton, and several times in London. Perhaps the most remarkable reception which he received was given by the London Congregational Board in Memorial Hall, September 26th. On October 15th, he gave an address to theological students in the City Temple. There were six hundred of these, besides more than six hundred ministers, who listened to his address.

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<sup>1</sup> "A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," pp. 37-38.

His first lecture was given in Exeter Hall, London, on July 19th. He had not spoken in Exeter Hall since October, 1863, and that was under vastly different circumstances. In this address he said: "If England is not proud of America, why, then, the latter will make her so." Canon Farrar, Canon Fleming, and many other well-known preachers of England heard this first lecture on "The Reign of the Common People." The occasion was deemed a triumph.

It is needless to recall all the incidents of his last summer in Great Britain in order to give an impression of the great cordiality with which he was received in England, Scotland, and Ireland. "Between the 4th of July and the 21st of October, fifteen and one-half weeks, Mr. Beecher preached seven times, gave nine public addresses, and delivered fifty-eight lectures. For the fifty-eight lectures he cleared the sum of eleven thousand six hundred dollars, net of all expenses for himself and Mrs. Beecher, from the day they sailed from New York, June 19th, to the day they arrived at their home in Brooklyn, October 31st. That was his summer vacation."<sup>1</sup>

On his last day in England, October 18th, he was given a reception by the Liverpool Congregational Board, and one of the addresses was made by Rev. Charles A. Berry, of Wolverhampton, with whom Mr. Beecher was so greatly pleased that he marked him out for his own successor. Within about a year from that time Mr. Berry was called to the pastorate of Plymouth Church, but declined the invitation.

Dr. Parker, whose kindnesses to Mr. Beecher were

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<sup>1</sup> "A Summer in England with Henry Ward Beecher," p. 122.

incessant, and to whom Mr. Beecher's heart had gone out with strong tenderness, has given a report of the great American's reception in England. Wherever he spoke the largest churches were entirely inadequate for the accommodation of the people who completely blocked all the approaches. Mr. Beecher himself was simply amazed at the "unanimity and extent of the recognition of his ministry by pastors, students, and preachers all over the Christian community. In many a group of ministers I have seen Mr. Beecher standing as a father, giving and receiving blessing."

"He was hospitably entertained by the American residents of London and the provinces, also by the Lord Mayor of London, the London Congregational Board, an Association of Ministers in Glasgow, the Congregational District Board of Liverpool, and by a General Meeting of Ministers in Belfast; it will be further proved when I tell you that the Right Hon. William E. Gladstone invited Mr. Beecher to hospitality, and that, amongst those who wrote to him, alluded to his services, welcomed him, and in some other way expressed their interest in him were Lord Iddesleigh, the Dean of Westminster, Dean of Canterbury, Archdeacon Farrar, Canon Wilberforce, Canon Fleming, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, Sir John Lubbock, George Jacob Holyoake, Prof. Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, and innumerable members of Parliament."

When in England in 1886 he wrote: "I want to come home. I have wandered enough. I cannot say

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<sup>1</sup>"Parker's Eulogy," p. 24.

I have rested enough for I have been kept very busy.  
I long every year to lay down my tasks and depart.  
It is not a judgment formed on reasonable grounds.  
It is simply a quiet longing of the spirit, a brooding  
desire to be through with my work, although I am  
willing to go on, if need be."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Knox's "Life of Beecher," p. 521.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### NIGHT COMETH AND THE ETERNAL MORNING.

MR. BEECHER'S work was nearly over. Though returning in apparently vigorous health, his brain had had no rest. The Common Council of Brooklyn voted him a public reception but he declined it. Plymouth Church was decorated with flowers and evergreen vines when the pastor appeared again behind the olive-wood pulpit, and the old life of work was renewed. In the winter he took up once more the "Life of Christ," and also made a contract to publish his autobiography before July 1st, 1888. He was busy every week with letters to *The Christian Union*, and preached every Sunday. His mind worked vigorously and clearly and he once said of the "Life of Christ": "No man could in a lifetime write all I now see; how can I put it into one book?"

Conversing with an English clergyman, shortly before his final illness, with regard to the completion of his book, Mr. Beecher fell into a reverie, and, looking out of the window, he said: "Finish the Life of Christ. Finish the Life of Christ. Who can finish the Life of Christ? it cannot be finished."

He was soon to be with his Lord. On the 3d of March he seemed perfectly well. Mrs. Beecher

had planned to sail for Florida on the 8th of that month. On the 3d he went with his wife on a shopping trip to New York. Mrs. Beecher said: "I never knew my husband so lively, tender, or joyous before, or not in a long time." At nine o'clock that night he retired feeling weary. This was an hour earlier than usual. Mrs. Beecher was busy writing until one o'clock in the morning, and, finding her husband asleep at that time she decided to lie down in an adjoining room. In a few hours she was aroused, and going to Mr. Beecher's bedside found him suffering with extreme nausea. He said it was only a sick headache. He was soon sleeping again and was aroused by neither the rising bell nor the breakfast bell.

He slept through that day, and not until four o'clock in the afternoon was Dr. Searle, his physician, sent for. The doctor shook him by the shoulder and he slowly aroused himself. Mrs. Beecher said: "Father, you must get up and dress. It is afternoon and you will have to go to prayer-meeting. Do you hear me?" "Yes, I hear, but I don't want to get up. I will not go to prayer-meeting to-night. Tell them ——" But here he fell asleep again.

At seven the doctor returned and looked grave. "Raise your hand," he said. "Can you raise your hand?" "I—can—raise—it—high—enough—to—hit—you." The lips were smiling, the tones deep, but the hand he could not raise. Mr. Beecher looked earnestly upon his wife and the doctor. The physician's grave face told the story, and Mr. Beecher closed his eyes "and gave the hand of his wife a long, strong, and earnest pressure. It was the

realization of the inevitable; it was farewell. He never opened his eyes again."<sup>1</sup>

Drs. Hammond and Helmuth were called in from New York, and found that nothing could be done but to wait for the end. Sunday was a sad and anxious day in Plymouth Church. It was Communion Sunday. The hush of the solemn service was broken by sobs. On Monday and Tuesday evenings prayer-services were held in the lecture-room. "It was a noticeable fact that no one prayed for the pastor's recovery, it was accepted by all as a fact unalterable, that the time of his going home had come, and not one of those that loved him would have called him back."<sup>2</sup>

"When the end approached all the household were gathered. It was their unanimous wish that none but themselves and the physicians should be present, but the wish could not be entirely effected. When the end came all of the Beecher blood knelt or stood around. Not one of them shed a tear or gave expression to a sob then and there. The supreme self-control was in obedience to Mr. Beecher's often-expressed hope and wish that around his bed of release not tears should fall but the feeling should prevail as with those who think of a soul gone to its crowning."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Beecher died on Tuesday, March 8, 1887, at half past nine o'clock.

Mr. Beecher had always been opposed to the use of crape, deeming it a pagan symbol. He had said, "Provide flowers for me when I am gone," and within

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 633.   <sup>2</sup> "Life," pp. 634-635.   <sup>3</sup> "Life," p. 634.



ten minutes after he had passed from earth a wreath of roses was hung upon his door.

“ And he shall wear a truer crown  
 Than any wreath that man can weave him,

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God accept him, Christ receive him.”

Probably no such evidences of sorrow have ever been shown at the funeral of a private person in America as accompanied the burial of Henry Ward Beecher. It had been his wish that his much-beloved friend, Rev. Charles H. Hall, of the Church of the Holy Trinity, should conduct the service at his funeral hour. He had been a brave and trusting friend in times of sorest trial. In his remarks at the house, among other things, Dr. Hall said: “There was no man whom I ever heard, or whose works I have ever read, who inspired me so deeply with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He was a man of men, the most manly man I ever met, but he was also a man of God in the preëminent sense of the word.”

At the close of the private funeral services which were held at the house on Thursday, Company G. of the Thirteenth Regiment escorted, as guard of honor, the body of Mr. Beecher to the Church where for thirty-seven years his voice had spoken to all mankind. No emblems of mourning were placed among the funeral decorations, but flowers, evergreens, palms, and twining smilax transformed the organ and the pulpit and the platform into a wilderness of splendor and fragrance. Mrs. S. V. White had upholstered with carnations, roses, and smilax the chair in which the pastor had sat for so many years. “The coffin

itself was entirely covered with flowers, lilies of the valley, maidenhair fern, and smilax."

From half past eleven o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, an uninterrupted throng of people passed into the church to take a last look at one who had never feared the face of man, and who had lived his life bravely and truly in the face of God and of the people. The organ was played now and then, and appropriate music was sung during nearly twelve hours,

On Friday those who were personally invited were admitted to Plymouth Church for the public services. Only members of the Church and those especially asked, including some of the most distinguished men of the country, eminent ministers of all denominations, including several Catholic clergymen, were admitted. Business was suspended in Brooklyn during the hour of the service, all the schools—public and private—the courts and public offices in Brooklyn were closed by order of the City Government. Great throngs attended the funeral services which were held in four other churches, the First Baptist Church, the First Presbyterian Church, the Church of the Saviour, and the Sands Street Methodist Church, where glowing addresses were made in honor of one who had loved all Christians and all men. Rabbi Harrison said among other things: "All sects revered him, all Churches and creeds recognized in him the incarnation of their best thought. He stands at the head of his age and his fame will always remain." Dr. Talmage thought the Colosseum at Rome, which held eighty thousand spectators, would have been insufficient to accommodate the people who wished to

do honor to the great friend of humanity. In his address at the funeral Dr. Hall referred very feelingly to the unfinished "Life of Christ," and reminded his hearers "that, though the English-speaking race to-day mourns his call and recognizes its loss, Americans feel that he has been a great leader or adviser in the guidance of all manner of substantial interests, though the Legislature of the State has paid him an unusual honor—of adjourning—as his right, though the press and divines and orators of all degrees are trying to compass the mighty theme in glowing words, in words of exulting grief that we have had him with us so long—and have lost him—yet, that, as he lies there so quiet, we may look at him as one who had been, through all and in all things, an apostle of one supreme thought, a preacher of the everlasting Gospel of the ever-living Christ."

Very beautifully Dr. Hall told the story of Mr. Beecher's last evening in Plymouth Church; how after "the congregation had retired from it, the organist and one or two others were practising the hymn—

'I heard the voice of Jesus say  
Come unto Me and rest.'

'Mr. Beecher, doubtless with that tire that follows a preacher's Sunday work, remained and listened. Two street urchins were prompted to wander into the building and one of them was standing perhaps in the position of the boy whom Raphael has immortalized, gazing up at the organ. The old man, laying his hands on the boy's head, turned his face upward and kissed him, and, with his arms about the two, left the scene of his triumphs, his trials, and his successes for ever.'

“It was a fitting close to a grand life,—the old man of genius and fame shielding the little wanderers ; great in breasting traditional ways and prejudices, great also in the gesture so like him, that recognized, as did the Master, that the humblest and the poorest were his brethren,—the great preacher led out into the night by the little nameless waifs.”

After the close of Dr. Hall's address, the congregation took their last look of the well-beloved face which they had seen so often glowing like the face of the great leader who came down the mountain from the presence of God. Then the doors of the church were opened, and once more the public were admitted. The grief-smitten crowd reached in a line almost down to Fulton Ferry, more than half a mile away. Nearly one hundred thousand people, by actual count, passed by the sacred coffin.

On Saturday, the 12th of March, the body, accompanied by about fifty persons, including the officers and prominent members of the Church, was taken to Greenwood Cemetery where, after a touching prayer by the Rev. Mr. Halliday, the casket was placed in the vault. Underneath a decoration of palms, and amid the mourning of the American people, Henry Ward Beecher was at rest.

He himself had always said that dying was the best part of life to those who live worthily ; that death was as blessed as bird-singing in spring and sweet as flowers ; that its path was rosy, and royal, and golden. He had often yearned for dying. “I have drunk at many a fountain, but thirst came again ; I have fed at many a bounteous table, but hunger remained ; I have seen many bright and

lovely things, but while I gazed their luster faded. There is nothing here that can give me rest, but when I behold Thee, Oh God, I shall be satisfied." "Our foremost citizen," as Dr. Chadwick called him, great in achievements, great in character, whose heart had brooded with tenderest love over all men, and whose fame had touched all horizons, was safe at last from all human assault, safe in the hearts of the people, at home in the bosom of God.

Mr. Beecher incarnated American democracy in all its higher tendencies, and the people everywhere mourned him. In New York, Brooklyn, and throughout the land, the pulpit, on the Sunday following his death, uttered the National voice in regard to his transcendent abilities and his wide-reaching services. As Mr. Beecher had touched all classes of American citizens, so his death was mourned by all.

Of course, words of criticism were frequent enough. His views had not suited exactly the views of any school of thought, whether in politics or in religion, but he had a great hold on all good men and all good men had a share in him. The Union League Club and many other clubs expressed their grief and admiration in suitable words. The Clerical Unions of New York, Boston, and Chicago paid tribute to the illustrious dead. The Clerical Union of Brooklyn, representing many denominations, in its resolutions rehearsed the great qualities which "made him supreme among the preachers and orators of his time." The New York Legislature, in adjourning on the day of his funeral, declared his fame one of the brightest possessions of the State.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### "THIS WAS A MAN."

**EVEN** his enemies, who were legion, never failed to recognize in Mr. Beecher a great antagonist. To his friends, he was as good as he was great. He had the power of turning his enemies into friends. An ex-Confederate officer, visiting in New York, who had made up his mind to hear Beecher, and who said, "It would do me good to take a rifle along and just put a bullet through him as he stands in the pulpit pretending to preach the Gospel," went with the Rev. Frank Russell to Plymouth Church in 1865, and poured out his whispered criticisms at almost everything he saw and heard. He was not subdued by the singing; he was somewhat quieted by the prayer; the sermon awakened a great struggle in his mistaken soul and tears came to his eyes. As he walked to the ferry he said: "I swear I believe I have been egregiously mistaken about that man." The next Sunday he was introduced to Mr. Beecher, and from that time could not endure to hear a word spoken against him.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. George W. Cable, said of him: "He united larger proportions of strength and benevolence than any other man I ever knew." He was beloved by the great masses of the American people, not only by those of New England blood, but equally by the negro,

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Frank Russell, "Life," p. 384.

the Irish, Jew, German, and Catholic. "Towards the Jews he acted the part of a man and brother in the truest sense."<sup>1</sup>

Some small men could never begin to understand Henry Ward Beecher. He was so various, so unconventional, so original, so unlike themselves. The difference between him and other eminent men seemed to be partly a difference in abundance of life. As with Phillips Brooks, he was affluent with animal, intellectual, and spiritual life. He was intensely vital, intensely human. Mr. Beecher was a luxuriant forest full of trees of all sizes and shapes, not an artificial French garden set out with boxed trees and laid out in geometric forms. It is easier to understand men of another mould. When a man is like a single evergreen tree, symmetrical, simple, and scarcely ever changing, he is more easily comprehended.

Mr. Beecher was grandly positive. Abounding in all things, his cup ran over and sometimes spilled over. He was so thoroughly human that we think of him as one of ourselves, entering sympathetically into the spirit of our common life. We are almost surprised when he suddenly towers up a hero. What Lowell so finely sang of Lincoln was equally true of Mr. Beecher.

"His was no lonely mountain peak of mind,  
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,  
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind;  
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,  
Fruitful and friendly to all human kind,  
Yet also nigh to heaven, and loved of loftiest stars."

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<sup>1</sup> Felix Adler, "Beecher Memorial," p. 97.

It is easy to catalogue the qualities which he, in a large measure, illustrated; to speak of his courage, enthusiasm, tenderness, versatility, frankness, geniality, magnetism, philanthropy, intensity, mettlesomeness, patience, modesty, toilsomeness, catholicity, tolerance, sympathy, common sense, unresentfulness, righteousness, wrathfulness, lovableness, transparent purity, unconventionality, perennial humor, humility, loneliness, mental fertility, comprehensiveness of vision, and all the riches of his prophetic and poetic gifts; but a half hour's acquaintance with him in his best mood, whether in public or in private, is worth more than all such cataloguing.

It was the man rather than the clergyman that the people recognized and loved. "He seemed to me," said General Sherman, "more like an army comrade than a minister of the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking with enthusiasm, Grant once called him "a great noble-hearted boy." His life was war, his heart was peace and love. "He was a soldier of the church militant, but his warfare was with human wrong and misery, with false theories of life, and poor aims and ambitions."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. R. W. Raymond said of him: "I never met another man who was so entirely the same in public and in private."

From whom shall we learn the truth about Henry Ward Beecher unless from those who saw him most and loved him most? On whom does the light of a man's character cast his real image if not upon his

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<sup>1</sup> "Memorial Volume," p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> George Willam Curtis, "Beecher Memorial," p. 21.



friends? "The simple truth is that no experienced lawyer who knew him could ever have failed to see that nothing but the utmost courage, candor, and truthfulness would at any time fit the character of Henry Ward Beecher. . . . For any counsel to advise him to utter an evasion, much less a falsehood, would have been worse than a crime—it would have been an unpardonable blunder."

"No man who knew Mr. Beecher intimately could doubt that he was preëminently a man of God and walked with God."<sup>1</sup>

In body, Henry Ward Beecher was more of the English than of the American type, but his face and brow suggested no nationality. They were the expression of his own mobile spirit and lofty genius. "The modern English Broad Church," says Higginson, "aims at breadth of shoulders as well as of doctrines. Our American saintship also has begun to have a body to it—a body of divinity indeed." Although of large and robust vitality, Mr. Beecher's physical health was not perfect. He was one of those civilized men who need to take wise and thoughtful care of themselves. He was an example to all preachers in the thought which he gave to the body. He was abstemious, never a very hearty eater, using food as an engineer uses fuel. His physical resources were enormous, and it was part of his religion to breathe good air and enjoy sound sleep, and plenty of it, to take good food, and not too much of it. He was a man of physical courage

<sup>1</sup> "Henry Ward Beecher—A Memorial Service," p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Lyman Abbott, "Life," p. 654.

and very cool in times of peril. He once killed a mad dog with a single stroke of an axe. Perhaps physical courage is sometimes a help to moral courage. "It seemed as easy for him to breast the currents of popular opinion, and to obstruct the force of heavy tyrannies, as it is for many to float on the changing stream of the one or to be instruments and supporters of the other."<sup>1</sup>

He kept his body in thorough working order. "I am a total abstainer both in belief and practice. I hold that no man in health needs, or is the better for, alcoholic stimulants." Whatever use of stimulants he made when in poor health was "occasional, exceptional, and wholly medicinal." At public dinners he was often a total abstainer from food and drink, his only indulgence being a drink of water. Mrs. Beecher says that when not so deeply interested in the conversation as to neglect his food, he ate—as he did everything else—with vigor and evident enjoyment. "He well understood the difference between good and bad cooking."<sup>2</sup>

When seated in the dining-room of the Ebbitt House, in Washington, his table was soon surrounded by many, eager to have a word, and everybody was kept laughing, as he had a theory that no serious subject should ever be discussed at dinner.

"It was Mr. Beecher's custom to take a nap every afternoon for an hour or two, whether at home or abroad, traveling or wherever he might be. I have been riding on the train with him when he would talk

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<sup>1</sup> Senator George F. Edmunds, "Beecher Memorial," p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Beecher in *Ladies' Home Journal*, March, 1892.

in the most interesting way, drop off in the middle of a sentence into a sound sleep and sleep for some little time. He told me once that one secret of his good health was his ability to sleep so much, and that he would allow nothing to deprive him of his sleep. I was once at dinner on Sunday, at his home in Brooklyn, and after dinner he took me to his two studies, showing me the various points of interest in his house, his library, his writing-desk, etc., etc., and some of the pictures of his father, of whom I said, he looked like a statesman. His answer was, 'He was a statesman.' Then, the hour apparently having arrived for his nap, in the most courteous manner he said: 'I hope often to see you in Brooklyn, come again, come always,' and then he began immediately to prepare for his afternoon sleep which was an indication to me that it was time for my visit to draw to a close."<sup>1</sup>

Gen. Horatio C. King thought Mr. Beecher the best traveling companion he ever had known. It was his good fortune to be with him two weeks on a famous lecture tour throughout the West. "He always spoke of this as the time when he built his home at Peekskill out of wind."<sup>2</sup>

Those who knew him well found that he was as great and brilliant in conversation, when in the mood for talk, as he was in the pulpit. "I believe that Mr. Beecher's finest sayings have been spoken in private. The slightest tinge of personal vanity would render this impossible."<sup>3</sup> He appears to have had some very strong friendships. Among the men to whom

<sup>1</sup> N. D. Pratt's "Reminiscences."

<sup>2</sup> Knox's "Life of Beecher," p. 344.

<sup>3</sup> "Life," p. 345—Rev. William Burnet Wright, D.D.

he was most drawn out was Dr. John H. Raymond, his traveling companion of 1863.

Whatever he studied he went into thoroughly. "In reply to a question about Herbert Spencer," says Rev. William Burnet Wright, "he gave me an account of Spencer and his writings, with a wealth of biographical details and a knowledge of the man's entire system which would have been remarkable in a carefully prepared and written lecture. I have often tested him in the same way on other themes, only to find him equally well informed and ready."

Mr. Beecher's conscience took the shape and quality and expressed the force and range of his understanding. It was unconventional, original, and sensitive where ordinary men are insensitive, and tolerant, flexible, and courteous where narrower understandings would have made its workings hard and rigid. There was nothing of the self-seeker in Henry Ward Beecher. "I have no ambitions. I have sought no laurels; I have deliberately rejected many things that would have been consonant to my taste. I remember as if it were yesterday, when I laid my literary ambition and scholarly desires upon the altar and said: If I can do more for my Master, and for men, by my style and manner of working, I am willing to work in a secondary way, I am willing to leave writing behind my back, I am willing not to carve statues of beauty, but to do what would please God in the salvation of men."

A missionary among the Sioux Indians recalls an incident of his personal kindness, as she deemed it. She was to speak to his people Sunday evening, on her work. He was to introduce her and then leave the platform, and slip away to hear some noted Eng-

lish divine. He so rarely had an opportunity of hearing anybody preach that he wished to improve it. The missionary was rather glad of the absence of so famous a speaker, but, after she had delivered her address, the first person to greet her with a cordial shake of the hand was Mr. Beecher, who said: "You see I did not leave. I wanted to see if you could hold your hearers, and I became so interested in the Indians that I could not leave."

"After his entirely legitimate observation, at one of the evening prayer-meetings, to the effect that rather than countenance or support mob-violence, a man ought to be willing to forego something of comfort, and, if necessary, live on a dollar a day and get along on bread and water, and, for a change, water and bread, I believe that he felt that to a certain extent, the sympathetic good will of great bodies of working men had been withdrawn, and that he had been in a sense misrepresented as not entirely one of them in every reasonable demand that they might make. I recollect one Sabbath that he referred with sudden and heartfelt eloquence to the subject, ending up what he had to say with these words: 'Men say because I have told them most needful truths that I am not on the side of the working man, that I am not his friend. If I am not the friend of the working man, *who is?*' The manner in which the words were uttered could not fail to impress all present with Mr. Beecher's deep conviction that if it were not for his presence in the world, the working man would be friendless indeed."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From a letter by W. E. Davenport, Brooklyn.

There were flaws enough, doubtless, in this man's character, rough spots in this great soul, but, seen at his best, studied at times when most good men would look ugliest, watched when attacked by those whom he loved, aspersed and defiled by tongues set on fire with malice, his character appears so radiant with the spirit of Him who breathed forgiveness from the Cross, that it has large claims to be called saintly. I know not where else, among the great men of this country, to find in one nature such tremendous outbursts against injustice and sin, and at the same time an equal force of Christly character. The Son of Thunder was the Apostle of Love.

"Great natures," says Lyman Abbott, "have great faults. But Mr. Beecher's were only faults—flaws on the surface—not vices that corrupted the heart." He was not always wise in his opinions, and often far from wise in presenting them. He well knew, as Demosthenes said in his Oration on the Crown, that "men by nature listen joyfully to slanderers and defamers," and yet even this knowledge did not lead him to cultivate the virtue of prudence. The defects of Mr. Beecher's character were as conspicuous, to eyes that search for defects, as his virtues. He was a man of superabundant force, and valued force more than symmetry or finish. As he said in his eulogy on General Grant, "Men without faults are apt to be men without force. A round diamond has no brilliancy. Lights and shadows, hills and valleys give beauty to the landscape. The faults of good and generous natures are often overripe goodness or the shadows which their virtues cast."

It may have been an exhibition of his frank, fearless,

and unselfish spirit that he put into self-condemning letters, which could be used to ruin him, the contrition which he felt for the misfortunes he had brought to a friend's household; but the utter lack of foresight which this manifested must be condemned, as the sorrow which it occasioned fell heavily on innocent and trusting thousands. There were streaks of coarser grain running through what was fine in his nature. But if his imprudence and folly brought him into shame and clouded his days with distressing darkness, to him was given the grace to support his griefs with a Christian patience and sweet resignation, to which we can find few parallels. He had a divine hopefulness and saw at once the good in things most evil.

Mr. Beecher was invited, in the days when he was deemed most of a heretic, to preach in one of the leading orthodox Churches of Chicago. Though the second half of his sermon was supremely beautiful, and brought tears to the eyes of many, as he pictured the suffering mother bending over her child as an illustration of divine love, the first part of the sermon was taken up with a severe criticism of some articles of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The pastor and many members of the Church thought him discourteous, or, at least, forgetful of the proprieties. What he actually said was far from being as severe and critical as remarks since made on the same theme by orthodox divines in the Presbytery of New York, but at that time members of the Presbyterian Communion were much more sensitive to criticism of their standards. Mr. George W. Cable, learning what Mr. Beecher had done,

expressed the opinion that there was nothing discourteous in Mr. Beecher's freeing his mind as he did. Mr. Beecher afterwards expressed his regret at the unpleasant feeling that his sermon had occasioned, although he himself did not recall any severity, or anything that need be objectionable. It was always his custom, he said, to speak the truth as he believed it and as it appeared to him at the time of his speaking, no matter where he was.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher had not the practical wisdom and thoughtfulness of his father, Lyman Beecher. He was not an ideal man any more than Cromwell, Luther or the Apostle Paul. We think of him not as a statue, "moulded in colossal calm," but as a cataract thundering, grandiose, sparkling with foam, garlanded with rainbows. Grace, experience, and sorrow subdued and mellowed, as well as enlarged, his vigorous vitality, but the points of rugged strength in him were so prominent, that the moral artist would hardly say that he was statuesque, or, if so, we must look to the Goth, and not to the Greek, for our patterns. We define some men by what they lack. We say that they have not this fault or that peculiarity. Not so Mr. Beecher. He might have said, with George Eliot's Felix Holt, that he had not learned to measure himself by the negations in him.

At Madison, Indiana, where the Rev. Harvey Curtis was the Presbyterian pastor, Mr. Beecher came to assist in a revival and was entertained by Mrs.—. After the evening meetings, Mr. Beecher used to tell funny stories about the inquiry-room and the odd

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<sup>1</sup> From N. D. Pratt's "Reminiscences."



people he met there. He could not help seeing and reporting these things. Of course he kept the young people in a roar of laughter, but the incongruity of his remarks had an unfortunate effect over some of them. Occasionally when persons with whom he was very familiar, became unendurably long-winded, he would listen to their tiresome stories, and then take a little candle, which he always carried in his bag, and stick it between his book and his near-sighted eyes, and read. He was often the guest in Chicago of Mrs. W——, and he always talked about the odd people they had known in Indiana. Sometimes, when they had not met for months, he would enter the hall without saying a word, would put his umbrella up in the corner in the funny familiar way of Mr. B——, and they would all sit down convulsed with laughter. When persons called whom he did not like to talk with, he would be very polite and uncommunicative, and after they had gone and closed the door he would lift up the doormat and shake it gently. Rev. Dr. E. F. Williams was talking with Mr. Beecher in Plymouth Church during the meetings of the Council in 1876. Mr. Beecher was sitting on the platform, swinging his feet, and said in that deliberate tone in which pathos and humor mingled: "When I am dead, men will say, how they abused him, that GREAT Mr. Beecher, how he was abused!"

Curious and laughable things seemed all the while happening in his life, and some of them had to do with his daily mail. All sorts of requests were forwarded by the letter-writing beggars. "One young man wanted Mr. Beecher to buy him a horse and a hearse, and thus enable him to have a monopoly of

the undertaking business in his native town. Another wanted Mr. Beecher to write him a lecture, which he would commit to memory, and then go out and astonish the people with it. One woman had lost two husbands, and had not the means to put up a gravestone for the last. She begged Mr. Beecher to give her the money for one, as she expected to marry in a few weeks, and wanted this done before her third marriage."<sup>1</sup>

"One wanted three thousand dollars to lift the mortgage from his farm. A clergyman, in distress, asked for a thousand, saying the Lord would repay it."<sup>2</sup>

His house was besieged from morning until night with men, women, and children, singly and in groups, with requests for the use of his name or counsel, for money, for help in finding a friend lost in the city, for work, for attendance at a funeral, for religious conversation, and so on, month after month. Dr. E. F. Williams and Dr. Goodwin, of Chicago, were talking with him after the great Chicago fire, and speaking of the lack of economy in the denominational work among the Congregationalists. The union of some of the theological seminaries was advocated. One of them said: "There is Hartford Seminary, it ought to be taken to San Francisco." "Yes," said Mr. Beecher, quick as a flash, "take it, by the way of Cape Horn!"

It is estimated that during his forty years in Brooklyn, Mr. Beecher earned, with pen and voice, nearly a million and a half of dollars. A very large

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Beecher, *Ladies' Home Journal*, May, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 656.

portion of this was given away. Rev. Dr. Frank Russell has written: "The impression is prevalent that Mr. Beecher's life was one of singular charity and generosity, and in this regard he was probably susceptible to every imposition. I have seen him hand money to those asking for alms, or calling at his door with pitiful tales of distress, in amounts which I silently thought were far too large for the occasion. The remark was common among those who knew of the circumstances, when his apparently large salary was the theme of the conversation, that it made very little difference how much Mr. Beecher received, for he would give it all away but his living, and his family had to watch pretty closely to get that."<sup>1</sup>

"He supported a large and growing family; he divided generously with his relatives by birth and marriage; he gave liberally during the war; he made constant contributions to deserving societies when collections were taken up in his church; he loaned money as cheerfully as he gave a glass of water; he bought his house on Columbia Heights; he bought a farm in Peekskill, and he erected and paid for a residence on that farm at a gross cost of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars."<sup>2</sup>

Few men have ever lived who were so resolute to return good for evil as Mr. Beecher. He was always kind to the newspaper men, from whom he suffered so much. A famous college president having published a discourteous, condemnatory letter about Mr. Beecher, one of Mr. Beecher's friends replied to it in

<sup>1</sup> Howard's "Life of Beecher"

<sup>2</sup> Howard's "Life of Beecher"

p. 503.

words of rebuke. Afterwards he told Mr. Beecher of this event, and said: "I hear that President — is having considerable trouble with the students at his college, and I am glad of it. I hope he will have so much of it that he will have to leave." But Mr. Beecher answered: "Oh, no; you should feel just the opposite; you should always feel sorry for any one in trouble. I know President —, and know the difficulty he is in just now, and had thought of writing him, and expressing my regret, and the hope that it would soon be over."

Probably no man of our generation has been more disliked and criticised by ministers. Mr. Beecher well knew it. As a result he stood very much by himself. "But I have never felt any bitterness toward those who regarded me with disfavor. And I speak the truth when I declare that I do not remember of having, toward any minister, a feeling that I would have been afraid to have God review on the Judgment Day."<sup>1</sup>

"During the great trial a brother clergyman brought to him the sympathies of many friends at the West, saying, 'I suppose that you get so many of these expressions that they begin to seem of little value.' Mr. Beecher then, with an evidently unshaken spirit, replied, 'When they come I receive them gladly and gratefully; when they do not come I am not discouraged or depressed. Tell those Western friends that I stand here like a cedar on Mount Lebanon.'"<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Pratt, in his "Reminiscences," says: "On the

<sup>1</sup> "Men of Our Times," p. 574.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Mr. C. H. A. Bulkley, Washington, D. C.

Sabbath, when riding with Mr. Beecher to Professor Swing's church, the conversation turned upon the great trial and sorrow of his life. I said to him that it seemed to me as if, in his time, the right and truth would appear, and that my wife, with a woman's intuition, had said to me, but a day or two before, that she felt quite sure he would live to see that time, and had also expressed the opinion that there must be some great purpose in God's dealing thus with one of His servants; but he said he did not hope for it, nor expect it; that he expected to live for the remainder of his life under a cloud; that it was God's will concerning his life, and he was resigned to it. He said that some great purpose there must be, indeed, in permitting such a calamity and such great suffering. He said that words could not express, and no one could know, the bitterness of such a trial. He told me then that, ever since the beginning of the trouble until now, he had never renewed, or sought to renew, an acquaintance or former friendship. In all cases he had waited for others to make the advances, and he spoke of the inexpressible trial it was to him, whose friends had been myriad, to take such a position as this, because of the calamity that had befallen him,—innocent—and engaged in a sincere and earnest effort to help and to save others. His words and his manner were such that they impressed me wonderfully, and it seemed as if it were impossible to endure it. I could not understand, as all his friends could not, the mystery of God's dealing with him."

Frequent reference has been made to what has been called the "morbid streak" in his nature. His father had lived for years after the failure of his mental

powers, and Mr. Beecher, although not usually given to borrowing trouble, feared that mental failure might come to him at last. He talked a good deal about sending in his resignation to Plymouth Church. On one occasion, while in England, in 1886, his wife asked for the letter of resignation, which he carried in his pocket, and requested from him a promise that he would never write another like it. He gave her the letter and she tore it in pieces and tossed it into the fire.

He was happy with children and made them happy. He used mild means in training his own children. When the offenses, however, were those of meanness, falsehood, cruelty, or dishonesty, he could punish with great earnestness and severity. He always continued his love of simple pleasures, the sports of children, the delight of exercise, marbles, swimming, sliding on the ice-fields. "He was always the youngest member of his family, always the most sympathetic friend of his boys and his daughter." "In April, 1883," says Mr. Pratt in his "Reminiscences," "I arranged an entertainment at my house for my children, one of a series, and had a little programme printed. One of these I sent to Mr. Beecher not expecting to hear from him. In a few days I received the following:

BROOKLYN, April 27, 1883.

MY DEAR MR. PRATT—Instead of going out under Pond's care hereafter, I am thinking of organizing a company of my own, and I am looking out for material.

I notice a new movement in Chicago which I wish you would inquire into and give me a report. It seems like a concert troupe, headed by Ned and Mamie Pratt; at any rate they are set forth as managers. I would like you to find out:

I. Is this a moral and instructive combination, equal on emergency, to Barnum's in educational benefit?

II. At what price could I engage them for one season?

III. Would the expenses on the road, of the party, be large? Are they good travelers, easy to manage, good eaters, and generally respectable?

As this will be my first season out as an Operatic and General Manager, it is important that I make no mistake.

Yours sincerely,

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

In 1859 he bought a farm in Peekskill on the Hudson. Here he built a model country home, after making careful studies for several years. In the building of this home, which he called "Boscobel," he found great relief for his much-worried mind. The Peekskill Farm is the scene of much of his best life. "God alone knows the prayers, the thanksgivings in untroubled days, or self-consecration and submission to his Father's will in days of trial, which found their way up to his Saviour from the innumerable secluded spots which he found on that dear old Hillside Rest."<sup>1</sup>

Few men were fitted to enjoy country life like Mr. Beecher. "Boscobel," his new house at Peekskill, was entered in 1878, and became ultimately his permanent residence. "None outside of the family will ever know to how many 'Boscobel' was a veritable tower of refuge in dark days and troubled times; how many found inspiration there for greater work and increased courage for burden-bearing."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Beecher, in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> "Biography," p. 632.

His thirty-six acres were laid out with great care and planted with over sixteen hundred varieties of trees and shrubs. He raised Ayrshire and, later, Jersey, cows. The farm was well stocked with flowers and bees and dogs.

He was an expert and enthusiastic player of the game of croquet. His fondness for horses, and for fast horses, is well-known. He drove them fearlessly and with great skill. He was a great lover of books and the desire to buy them, as with many other bibliomaniacs, was a serious source of temptation and the cause of good-natured domestic trouble. "When is human nature so weak and helpless as in a bookstore? The appetite for drink cannot be half so great as the temptations which beset a book-lover in a large and richly furnished bookstore."<sup>1</sup>

He was a frequent visitor at the Old Corner Bookstore in Boston. One day he was looking over a pile of twenty or thirty volumes, all of them Lives of Christ, including Strauss's, Rénan's, Beecher's, and others, when Mr. Beecher spoke of his own as "the poorest in the whole collection." "'Farrar's Life,'" he said, "is worth more than all the rest put together."

His house was filled with engravings, and he made it an art gallery for his own cultivation and that of his children and friends. "It was a rare day at Dresden when we were shut up all day alone in the Hall of Engravings, and had a taste of the rarest and choicest bits of every school and period." The names of scores of the more important works in his

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Beecher, in *Ladies' Home Journal*, May, 1892.



library, including *Boydell's "Plates to Shakespeare,"* *Baillie's "Engravings After the Old Masters,"* an imperial folio containing impressions of "*Hogarth's Works,*" *Holbein's "Court of Henry VIII.,"* *Jerdan's "National Portrait Gallery,"* *Spence's "Polymetis,"* with plates by *Bortard* and others, have been published.

He is said to have been a good judge of the comparative merits of impressions, and among the original engravings and etchings which he possessed there were *Rembrandts, Dürers, Van Dycks, Lucas von Leydens, and Van Ostades.* He was also the owner of paintings by *Diaz, Inness, De Haas, J. L. Brown, W. Hamilton Gibson* and others. It was the opinion of *De Haas* that *Mr. Beecher's* services to the cultivation of the beautiful were such as to entitle him "to be ranked high in the brotherhood of those who see things invisible to the uncultured eye. Having the ear of the common people as no other of his generation has had, he brought his love of those things as an offering to God, and Art in his teaching became the handmaiden of religion."<sup>1</sup>

His fondness for jewels is well known. He was a great student of gems, and used to linger over them, refreshing his mind by feasting his eyes on their brilliant and varied colors. Jewelers entrusted him with valuable gems. The opal was his chief favorite. "Rubies, amethysts, topazes—all were loved as friends, not because of his love for their color, but because he seemed to read in them a page of the book of nature." His susceptibility to music, his

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 90.

delight in melody, are well known. Dr. William A. Hammond, of New York, writes: "Some songs, especially when sung by women with rich sympathetic voices, and with the feeling that the subject and the music required, never failed to move him, and not infrequently to bring tears. I remember how upon one occasion he told me, as the piece was being played by Thomas's orchestra, that Gounod's 'Funeral March of a Marionette' caused in him such a mixture of emotions that he did not know whether to laugh or to cry."<sup>1</sup>

He did not agree with the immortal Baillie Nicol Jarvie who assured Rob Roy that "the multiplication table is the root of all useful knowledge." Mathematics was not one of his strong points. He could not be trusted with figures, unless they were written out. Lawyer Shearman relates an amusing incident of Mr. Beecher's helplessness when trying to give the exact weight of "Great Tom," the Oxford bell. Dr. Talmage discovered that Mr. Beecher was not sure of the multiplication table!

He was a student, eager, delighted, enthusiastic, of all the changing moods of the seasons. He was a lover of farm-life and found in it his most profitable rest. He knew all the birds, and flowers had a wonderfully soothing effect on his nerves. Sky-gazing quieted his soul. His love of flowers, fruits, and farming continued through life. He published many essays on these things, and the horticultural allusions and figures which might be gathered from his more than thirty volumes would fill hundreds of pages.

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 85.

He was fond of horses, cows, dogs, and hens, and an essay on "Cackling" is said to have been the last article he ever published. Speaking of dogs he once said: "If the dog isn't good for anything else, it is good for you to love, and that is a good deal. I have two miserable scraggy dogs up at my Peekskill farm. They are practically good for nothing, but I sometimes think that they are worth more to me than the whole place."<sup>1</sup>

What he saw and said about nature was a revelation to common minds and also a help to special students, like John Burroughs.

No one understands Mr. Beecher's soul who has not read the "Star Papers," written from Lenox, Mass., in 1854. The heart of Berkshire was never more beautifully disclosed. These letters are among the classics in the literature of nature. His "Dream Culture," "Gone to the Country," "A Walk Among Trees" reveal to us a man whom Wordsworth and Ruskin would have hailed as a brother.

A book might be filled with instances of Mr. Beecher's wit and humor. He once described an old-fashioned sewing-circle: "You know," he said, "that a company of ladies get together, and they sew up their collars and they sew up their neighbors (accompanying the words by illustrating with his hand as if sewing); in fact, it is a sort of *sew*-cial cannibalism."<sup>2</sup>

At the close of the pew-renting in Plymouth Church, a friend said to him, "Mr. Beecher, I have been trying all the evening to get a seat and have not

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<sup>1</sup> Knox's "Life of Beecher," p. 499.

<sup>2</sup> "Life," pp. 193-194.

succeeded." To which Mr. Beecher replied, "Well, then, you must fulfill the apostolic injunction, and having done all *to stand*."<sup>1</sup>

At the close of Mr. Beecher's sermon in 1882, in the First Presbyterian Church, Chicago, a member of the congregation, a gentleman of great wealth, an intense admirer of Mr. Beecher, came up to him and said: "Fifteen years ago I loaned you a dime for fare on the ferry," and to this Mr. Beecher replied: "I hope you have not come to dun me for it now!"

No man relished a good social time with his friends more than Mr. Beecher. "In 1883," says Mr. Pratt, in his "Reminiscences," "when on a visit to New York, I enjoyed the last opportunity I ever had to hear Mr. Beecher preach in his own pulpit. I went to Plymouth Church in the morning, and at the close of the service stood not far from the pulpit, waiting for the people to withdraw, so I could speak to Mr. Beecher. Seeing me, he beckoned to me, and said: 'Pratt, I am glad to see you; you must go home to dinner with me to-day, or there will be a funeral in your father's family,' and I was glad to accept the invitation. Before leaving, Mr. Beecher showed me the various telephones that were attached to the pulpit desk, one reaching to Newark, one to Elizabeth, one to Orange, and, I believe, one or two into Brooklyn houses, and one or two into New York, so that his sermon was heard by persons at these various points every Sunday. As we stood at the church door for a moment, Mr. and Mrs. Beecher, Moses Beach and his wife, and myself, conversing, a very

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 193.

plain and plainly-dressed young man came up, and, without speaking, handed Mr. Beecher a small package and walked away. Mr. Beecher looked at it curiously, and remarked that, perhaps, it contained dynamite, and would blow us all up; however, he said we would all go together if it was, and he opened the package. It contained, in a small piece of paper, a nickel, and on the scrap of paper was written: 'Mr. Beecher, I heard your sermon this morning, and I want to be that kind of a Christian.' Mr. Beecher remarked that it was a humble and pleasant tribute."

"At dinner he was very jovial and entertaining. Though it was Sunday, he and I fell to telling stories, and after a little while Mr. Beecher looked up and said: 'Eunice, what makes you keep punching me so for? Pratt and I want to have a good time.' 'Well,' she said, 'I want you to behave yourselves; it is Sunday.' 'My dear,' he answered, 'I wish you would let me alone.' I recall that Sunday visit with Mr. Beecher with the greatest pleasure always. Before I left he took me to his various studies, and showed me his libraries, the desk where he wrote his sermons, various pictures of himself," etc.

Mr. Pratt has some amusing reminiscences of Mr. Beecher's meeting with common people. "That night we remained at Racine, and the next morning were detained for an hour or two, waiting about the hotel office. There were a number of countrymen lounging about the office, and one of them came up to me and said, 'Is that Mr. Beecher?' I told him it was. 'Is it Henry Ward Beecher?' 'It is.' 'Can I speak to him?' I said, 'You can, no doubt.' 'Well, how shall I do it?' I replied, 'Why go right up

and speak to him, as you would to any one else.' 'What will he do?' he asked. I told him that he would do what any one else would, and would answer him pleasantly. So he went up timidly and spoke to Mr. Beecher, and very soon they were engaged in earnest conversation, Mr. Beecher finding that this man was the son of one of his old parishioners at Indianapolis. I told Mr. Beecher of the man's questions and he remarked: 'I suppose he thought that if he spoke to me I would explode.'

"A man approached Mr. Beecher on the train and in a very pompous manner reached out his hand and said: 'This is Henry Ward Beecher, I believe?' Mr. Beecher replied in the affirmative, and the man said, 'Well, Mr. Beecher, fifteen years ago I shook hands with you in Michigan.' 'Well,' said Mr. Beecher, 'did it hurt you any?'"

Mr. Beecher wrote his own letters, though the business correspondence was turned over to his wife. He was punctilious in answering letters, sometimes giving a whole morning to the correspondence which had accumulated, but, unfortunately for him, he did not learn to use any of the modern devices for lessening the toil of the letter-writer. As an illustration of his care in answering inquiries from strangers, the following reply to questions about the duty of personal conversation with the unconverted will be of interest:

PEEKSKILL, N. Y., }  
July 17, 1884. }

DEAR SIR—This is vacation, and I am trying to answer some of the letters which have accumulated on my hands.

There are some who have the gift of easy approach and conversation with men respecting their religious experience and

condition. They can do it easily, spontaneously, effectively. Others are not so skillful, and do more harm than good. In the Apostles' day there were gifts (see I. Cor. 12), and one did not attempt to exercise the other's gifts. In some way a Christian man should let it be known (rather by his conduct than by his speech) that he is a follower of Christ.

As a teacher, one may have opportunity to give his class together a word of exhortation. Again, there come times when a single sentence may be dropped, or one may be so full of some experience that a friend might obviously wish a conversation. The whole thing may be left to one's common sense, provided his heart is filled with love and his whole life penetrated with a sense of Eternal truth. But an empty heart is not improved by chattering lips.

Do not intrude on men in a professional spirit, because it is the cant of the times. A doctor should not be inquisitive of every man's health whom he meets, and yet should be ready at all times to aid the sick, and so of lawyers, and so of ministers. It may be said that the soul is of more importance than the body, and that it is in peril every hour. Even so, experience shows that an intrusive conversation is not the best way of influencing it. One should be himself filled with the Spirit before he seeks to inspire. A routine Christian, talking to every one, because he thinks it to be his duty, is little better than a pair of bellows, puffing in winter in hopes of bringing on spring.

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

To CHARLES BEECHER HOLDREGE, President of the Illinois State Christian Endeavor Society.

He was at heart a Puritan, a true lineal descendant of that "earnest-eyed race, stiff from long wrestling with the Lord in prayer, who had taught Satan to dread the new Puritan hug." But as a loyal Puritan he set his face toward the future. He followed the spirit which led him across many a stormy sea, into new lands, into new continents of truth. And

though he could preach righteousness like a prophet of old Jerusalem, he became more and more imbued with the sunshine of the Gospel. Many of his best friends felt that toward the last his great heart preached the love of God too continuously, and that his charity overpassed the bounds of truth. He certainly became something less of a Puritan in his ideas of popular amusements. In his later years he modified his attitude toward the theater, and became acquainted in a most friendly way with some of the greater actors.

Has any other man touched our National life at so many points? President Cleveland has written of him: "An honorable pride in American citizenship, guided by the teachings of religion, he believed to be a sure guaranty of a splendid National destiny. I never met Mr. Beecher without gaining something from his broad views and wide reflections."<sup>1</sup>

"Like Lincoln, he stood on many occasions for incarnate common sense."<sup>2</sup>

But although he touched the common life, and the higher life, of the Nation at every point of the horizon, no one can read the story of his career without feeling that his truest life was hid with Christ in God. A trusted friend has written of him; "He always felt, and sometimes expressed, a deep sense of loneliness in his highest nature."<sup>3</sup>

But in that loneliness he knew Divine companionship, and with the help of his redeeming God, he was

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Childs, "Beecher Memorial," p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas G. Shearman, "Memorial Service," p. 23.



able to battle for truth and righteousness to the very end, leaving a name that shall inspire the generous youth of coming generations. What Eliza Reimarus wrote, as at the grave of the noblest of German authors, may well be repeated by those who shall stand above the sod in Greenwood which covers what was mortal of Henry Ward Beecher:

"I am the truth! And here is Lessing's grave  
As suns go down, so sank he to his rest,  
In fullest splendor, and lights other worlds.  
Yet as the sun, in his eternal course,  
The seed-corn opens, which with thousand fruits,  
Its blessings scatters to infinitude,  
So he, too, in my realm. And till this realm  
In God's wide universe shall be but one,  
I watch here by his urn, and gather in  
The oaths of those who him their brother called,  
And know that myriads on myriads  
Are scattered now in every land  
To arm themselves against you and your power.  
Yet ye, who mourn around your Lessing's dust,  
If all your tears are not to be grimaces,  
Then swear in earnest, on his ashes, swear  
For truth and manhood's sacred right, like him,  
In spite of Prejudice, and Prince, and Priest,  
With dauntless heroism still to fight,  
Till God shall call you to the realm of truth."

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE ELOQUENT ORATOR.

**THERE** is no doubt that the oratorical achievements of Henry Ward Beecher are among the most splendid in the history of the century. His oratorical genius was shown in the pulpit, on the platform, before popular assemblies stirred with political excitement, in the presence of mobs, in the hall of debate, and in familiar conversation. He was very unequal, and men might hear him in one of his quiet lectures, when he scarcely lifted his voice above a conversational tone, and get but the faintest conception of the slumbering powers, which, when evoked by some great theme or some great occasion that stirred his emotions, electrified and overawed his astonished listeners. Referring to his oratory, Dr. Cuyler finely says: "Of his marvelous charms of eloquence, I need no more write than of the grandeur of Handel's oratorios. It was something to dream about. His voice was as sweet as a lute and as loud as a trumpet. In its tenderest pathos, that witching voice touched the fount of tears. When he rose into impassioned sublimity, 'they that heard him said that it thundered.'" <sup>1</sup>

When touched by the heroic, or roused to sym-

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 42.

pathy for the suffering, Mr. Beecher's eloquence poured forth in a fiery tide. After going through the Soldiers' Home at Dayton, Ohio, and speaking kind words to the sick veterans, he addressed these wards of the Republic "with an eloquence," writes Gen. Horatio C. King, "which I have never seen equaled. They were held spellbound, and before he closed there was not a dry eye in that assembly of at least a thousand men, varying in age from forty to sixty years. . . . And when he attempted to pass through the crowd, they rushed to him to grasp his hand and poured forth their thanks until Mr. Beecher, himself almost overcome with emotion, was compelled to break away."<sup>1</sup>

An old minister, who for many years had lived in a Western town, has said: "The great sensation of the season to the rustics who go not out much into the great world has been the advent of Mr. Beecher and the pleasure of hearing him speak. We have seen the lion and heard him roar, and at times he would roar you as 'gently as a sucking dove,' but would soon assert his lionhood by coming out with his tremendous *basso-profundo*. His lecture was a splendid sermon, much of it occupied with splendid interpretations of the Scripture and some of it with 'that elder Scripture writ by God's own hand,' in the constitution of man. He is not an imposing presence. There is a good deal of the Little Corporal about him, especially in his power to wield men. But I feel glad and grateful for the privilege of hearing him, and think all who have listened to him **must** have marked that sure

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<sup>1</sup> Knox's "Life of Beecher,"

pp. 344-345.

characteristic of genius that it prompts them to higher achievements in whatever may be their line of work."

Mr. Beecher should be studied as a great master of oratorical style. He got his English from the very best sources. He never affected the colorless simplicity, the simple clearness, which has no beauty in it, practiced and applauded by some of the writers and conversational speakers of our time. He could be as conversational as Phillips, and surely no style is less artificial than his, but his words were the expression of his own abounding mental and moral life. He could be simple with the simplest, and ornate and imaginative with the great masters of English, like Milton and Burke.

His vocabulary is remarkably rich, and though he was a preacher for the common people, we find him employing at times quite a number of unusual, technical, or obsolescent words, such as "impudicity," "cacophonous," "incontradictible," "unsworded," "rugosities," "sinuosities," "vespertilian," "fuliginous," "basilar," "dismayful," "disbranched," etc. Mr. Beecher wrote English, purest English, and very rarely do we find him using any Latin or French expression. It is almost startling to stumble across anything in him so simple as "arrière pensée." This is not quite like Mr. Lowell's "Mississippi boatman quoting Tennyson," although it gives the reader a queer and humorous shock.

"Mr. Beecher," said his admiring friend, Dr. Parker, "had a supreme gift of language as was betokened by his planet-like eyes, eyes as full as Shakespeare's, as radiant as Gladstone's, as expressive

as Garrick's. In the use of words he was a necromancer."<sup>1</sup>

He poured forth, in the height of his emotion, his rushing sentences with such velocity at times that, not infrequently, he was as careless of grammatical propriety and construction as was the Apostle Paul in the glow and impetuosity of his epistles.

His popular lectures were on such themes as "The Ministry of the Beautiful," "The Uses of Wealth," "Amusements," "The Reign of the Common People," "Conscience," "Evolution not Revolution," "The Burdens of Society," "A Journey Across the Continent," "Character." Among his more noteworthy addresses in later life were those given at the Parnell Reception Meeting, the Centennial Address at Peekskill, the Address before the Army of the Potomac in 1878, at the Channing Memorial Service in 1880, at the Garfield Ratification Meeting in 1880, and the Eulogy on General Grant delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston. One of his best addresses was that on "Preaching" which he delivered before the Evangelical Alliance in New York in 1873. "He spoke," said Dr. Schaff, "like a king from his throne," and it was on occasions like this, when the creative powers of his mind were at work in all their miraculous quickness and force that Mr. Beecher showed what was in him.

In immediate impressiveness he has been equaled by no American of this century. The charm of Phillips's oratory will dwell longer in the delighted memories of the scholarly and refined. Phillips's presence

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<sup>1</sup> "Eulogy," p. 16.

had more classic dignity, and he captured the imagination of the hero-worshiper more completely. But, standing on the soil of common manhood, sharing more fully the general thought and life of the people, Mr. Beecher, with his far greater physical earnestness and emotional intensity, easily stirred a great audience more profoundly even than Wendell Phillips. With his hearty good nature and overflowing humor, he was able to say his severest things without giving deep offense. "Men will let you abuse them," he said, "if you will only make them laugh."<sup>1</sup>

Although, perhaps, not the greatest, he was yet the most successful of American lecturers, addressing larger audiences with greater pecuniary rewards than any other speaker. His editorial writing at its best had the same qualities with his most fiery public addresses. Mr. Beecher is justly deemed one of the two or three greatest editors that America has ever produced. He carried into his editorial work the rush and inspirational power which gave such vigor to his best oratory. He was not an editor who attended to the details of journalism, but he wrote with fury, at the last moment, what was uppermost in his mind, and his leaders in *The Independent*, it has truly been said, have never had their equal in kindling force in American journalism. *The Christian Union*, under his touch, sprang up into an unparalleled growth, reaching in a short time a circulation of more than one hundred and thirty thousand. Lyman Abbott, one of the best known religious journalists in America, has said: "His editorial influence will never

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<sup>1</sup> "Eyes and Ears," p. 59.

cease to be felt in the larger charity, the broader views of life, and the greater independence of thought which he, as much perhaps as any living man, has helped to impart to American journalism."<sup>1</sup>

On his lecture tours he was in charge of his agent and he had no cares on his mind. "But for such faithful supervision, Mr. Beecher could not have accomplished half what he did in that line. From the hour that he left for a lecturing trip until his return, he was as free from thought or anxiety about his work as a child."<sup>2</sup>

Innumerable stories have been told of his power of quick reply. At the farewell banquet given to Herbert Spencer on the 9th of November, 1882, Mr. Beecher was urged to do something to wake up the distinguished company, who had been rendered somnolent by rather heavy speeches. "Mr. Beecher did wake them up effectually by a magnificent speech, which roused the utmost enthusiasm. Dr. Hammond, the well-known Surgeon-General of the Army during the war, strode up to him, and in a voice which resounded through the hall, said: 'Mr. Beecher, you are the greatest man in America, sir.' Mr. Beecher instantly replied, with a reproachful air: 'Dr. Hammond, you forget *yourself*.'"<sup>3</sup>

Charles Dudley Warner, having heard one of the Yale Lectures on Preaching, and listened to his replies to the pointed inquiries of the students, thought that Mr. Beecher's mental alertness and unexpectedness,

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," pp. 132-133.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Beecher, *Ladies' Home Journal*, June, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> "Memorial Service," p. 32.

his quick-flashing wit, and his subtle humor, furnished a display of intellectual brilliancy hardly to be matched.<sup>1</sup>

At the close of his first Yale Lecture he was asked if he would not preach a fair proportion of *educating* sermons, and he instantly replied: "Men in the ordinary stage are like robins' eggs in the nest; you cannot feed them. Let the robins sit on them a little while and by and by there will be nothing but four mouths, and as fast as you put in worms they will gulp them. To educate man in the cold and natural state is just like feeding eggs. Warm them and give them life, and they will eat."

He was lecturing on "Communism" in the old Wigwam in Chicago, before an audience of ten thousand people. Everybody was subdued; the audience was breathless with interest. "He was telling the story of the rise of the power of the people. Presently he ended a ringing period with these words, pronounced in a voice so deep and fervid and full of conviction that they seemed to have been uttered then for the first time, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.'" But into the silence which followed this utterance came the voice of a half-drunken man in the gallery: "The voice of the people is the voice of a fool." Would Mr. Beecher be equal to such an interruption which made the sympathetic crowd shiver? He certainly was, for, looking toward the gallery from whence the voice came, he replied with simple dignity: "I said the voice of the people, not the voice of one man." The response from the audience

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," pp. 74-75.



was a sigh of happy relief rather than an explosion of laughter; but there was so much electric sympathy throughout the Wigwam that an outburst was waiting only for an occasion. And when the drunken fellow staggered to his feet and mumbled something unintelligible, Mr. Beecher paused again, and with his winning, half reproachful smile, said: "Will some kind person take our friend out and give him some cold water—plenty of it—within and without." "As two policemen took the disturber away, the tabernacle shook with cheers. They supposed they were cheering Mr. Beecher's wit, instead of that tremendous power which no one need try to analyze."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Pond thinks the most remarkable speech of Beecher's life, was given in Richmond, Virginia, in 1877. The city was excited, and circulars were issued denouncing Henry Ward Beecher after the style of the Liverpool posters in 1863. Anti-Beecher poetry was sold by the newsboys on the street. The people were urged not to hear such a man, but, expecting some excitement, the house was filled with a noisy crowd. Mr. Pond introduced Mr. Beecher who was greeted with applause and yells. The members of the Legislature were present. Mr. Beecher spoke on "Hard Times" and said, in his first sentence, that there was a law of God, a common and natural law, that brains and money controlled the universe. He said: "This law cannot be changed even by a big Virginia Legislature which opens with prayer and closes with benediction." As the law-makers were there, the laugh went around and soon the house was

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<sup>1</sup> Knox's "Life of Beecher," pp. 340-341.

applauding. Mr. Beecher eulogized Virginia as a commonwealth who bred her sons for Presidents, and when he had wrought up his audience with enthusiasm, he exclaimed: "But what a change when she came to breeding her sons for the *market!*" For two hours and a half the lecture went on. Once in his room at the hotel Mr. Beecher sat back in his chair and laughed, Mr. Pond remarks, as much as to say, "We have captured Richmond, haven't we?" Many Richmond notables knocked at his door that night and tried to persuade Mr. Beecher to give another lecture. This was impossible, but the people came in crowds the next morning at seven o'clock to see him off.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher appears to the least advantage in the oratory of memorial occasions, when protracted research, clearness, and accuracy of statement, long-brooding thoughtfulness and care, logical arrangement and historical imagination, and a conscientious enthusiasm for literary perfection, like that of Thucydides and Macaulay, work together to produce such masterpieces as Lowell's Harvard address, some of the discourses of Professor Park, several of the orations of Edward Everett, George William Curtis, Ex-Governor John D. Long, and Senator George F. Hoar, and, conspicuously, the greater efforts of Dr. Richard S. Storrs. Compared with Dr. Storrs's Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard, his Wycliffe oration and his sermon at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Board, Mr. Beecher's more elaborate written speeches appear rhetorically crude. His genius

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," pp. 155-157.

worked habitually and most effectively in another way. Eloquence, with him, was a sudden, fiery inspiration, kindling his gathered materials into a rhetorical illumination, which, if not always seen at its highest glow, was sometimes more startling and marvelous than the deliberate and premeditated eloquence of other men.

It is hard to imagine Shakespeare correcting and polishing his plays, and it is almost equally hard to imagine Beecher combing the locks of his speeches, washing their faces, and straightening their clothes, in order to make the most presentable appearance to posterity. Furthermore, Mr. Beecher was so continually called upon to stand and deliver his thought, that he may be said never to have had time for that ceremonial eloquence so delightful to the more cultivated American people.

But, though it was not his to be great in every form of oratory, he surpassed others in the highest forms. His one speech, delivered in five parts before the English people, in 1863, is doubtless the grandest speech of the nineteenth century. It will bear and repay the most careful analysis and most prolonged study. Out of the materials gathered, and the convictions matured by many years of study, it sprang into life under the pressure of a great opportunity.

Speaking from his pulpit at an earlier time, as the voice of outraged humanity condemning the Fugitive Slave Bill, there flashed forth these words: "I would die myself, cheerfully and easily, before a man should be taken out of my hands, when I had the power to give him liberty, and the hound was after

him for his blood. I would stand as an altar of expiation between slavery and liberty, knowing that, through my example, a million men would live. A heroic deed, in which one yields up his life for others, is his Calvary. It was the hanging of Christ on that hill-top that made it the highest mountain on the globe. Let a man do a right thing with such earnestness that he counts his life of little value, and his example becomes omnipotent. Therefore it is said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. There is no such seed planted in this world as good blood!" In quoting this passage, Washington Gladden writes: "It is impossible for me to give any indication of the power with which these words were spoken. It seemed as if the very walls quivered with the intensity of the feeling. In the crowded church men's eyes were blazing, and their chests were heaving, and tears were falling on the pale cheeks of women; it was one of those exalted moments that do not often visit us on this earth."<sup>1</sup>

Even when Mr. Beecher was far less than his greatest, his eloquence, with voice and pen, was one of the potent forces for the elevation of his countrymen. We rightly think of him during forty years of his life as the voice of the nobler sentiment of America, appealing for justice and humanity. "His pulpit moved around in the daily press, and was on the banks of the Ohio and the Missouri, while, as the old Scottish clan sprang forth from the bushes when their chieftain gave a blast on his trumpet, the audiences of this evangelist issued at his call from all the hills

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<sup>1</sup>"Beecher Memorial," p. 92.

of the East and the waving grass of the West. The public services of Daniel Webster did not cover so wide a space of time, nor did the great career of Abraham Lincoln take in so many circles of the sun."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. David Swing, "Beecher Memorial," pp. 34-35.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### HE PREACHED CHRIST.

A VOLUME might easily be written on Henry Ward Beecher as the most powerful and famous preacher of the nineteenth century. Professor Phelps has said: "The best test of a good sermon is the instinct of a heterogeneous audience. That is not good preaching which is limited in its range of adaptation to select audiences. The sermon is in kind the grandest thing in literature, because it sways the mind without distinction of class." Few men ever mingled "truth and personality" so absolutely as Mr. Beecher. He preached Christ as Christ was revealed in his own heart.

One difference between him and Mr. Spurgeon was this: Mr. Spurgeon received the truth as a pearl of great price, something beautiful, inestimable, unchangeable. Mr. Beecher received the truth as a seed, vital, germinant, expanding, capable of being transformed into higher manifestations. During his grand life, Spurgeon was telling with great force of language and fervor of feeling, how beautiful, how wonderful, was this divine jewel. During his long ministry Mr. Beecher was speaking with grateful enthusiasm of the Kingdom of God as it was expanding in his soul and in the world. Spurgeon was the

greater herald, Beecher was the greater interpreter and the mightier witness. Spurgeon preached what he received at the start, the Gospel that came to him full-orbed and perfect.

Mr. Beecher was unable to permanently adopt what came to him from others. He learned with Robertson that a man must struggle alone; his own view of truth and that only will give him rest. He can only accept the views of other minds for a time. "I have my own peculiar temperament; I have my own method of preaching, and my method and temperament necessitate errors. I am not worthy to be related in a hundred thousandth degree to those happy men who never make a mistake in the pulpit." Truth seemed to him not a thing finished, not something perfectly revealed, but rather as something yet to be attained in its fulness. He was not disposed to forget the words of the Apostle, that we know in part, and he felt the wisdom of Pascal when he wrote: "One may make an idol of truth even, for truth without love is not God; it is only His reflection and an idol which we ought not to adore."

Charles H. Spurgeon seemed greater than Mr. Beecher, both in service and in spiritual power, to men whose convictions led them to the orthodoxy of the past. He was a man of granitic faith, and rose at times into the spiritual fervor and majesty of one of the Hebrew prophets. His intellectual resources were large, but they belonged to a lower range than Mr. Beecher's. The great Englishman was eminently fitted, as a thinker and a preacher, to reach and mould the sturdy and unimaginative lower classes of his countrymen. Mr. Beecher's was a far loftier mind, more daring,

more imaginative, and infinitely more fertile in ideas.

George S. Merriman, his associate for a time on the *Christian Union*, said: "While not naming him, of course, with Plato for originality, he was essentially of Plato's type in his interpretation of the universe, by a lofty impassioned idealism, and the serene light of the Athenian sage kindled in the Christian preacher into a warmer and tenderer glow."<sup>1</sup>

Spurgeon had great qualities of character which Mr. Beecher did not possess. He was preëminent as an organizer, a builder of institutions, and into some of the mistakes of Mr. Beecher's life he never could have fallen. But, on the other hand, Mr. Beecher was a leader of leaders, a daring explorer in the world of the spirit, a Columbus voyaging over unknown seas of thought. He believed in a present inspiration, and hence in a growing understanding of God's universe. "If his life," said General Frémont, "had been cast in Southern Europe or Asia, he would have been a great prophet and swayed nations."

He touched not only the people, but the loftier minds. It is reported that "when Charles Kingsley heard him he sat and wept like a child through the whole discourse, and when it was concluded he said: 'Mr. Beecher has said the very things I have been trying to say ever since I entered the Christian pulpit.'"<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Howson, the Dean of Chester, who had been greatly moved by Mr. Beecher's printed and spoken words, sent him from England one of his own books

<sup>1</sup> "Beecher's Personality," John R. Howard, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> "Beecher's Personality," by John R. Howard, p. 159.



in grateful return for one that Mr. Beecher had presented him. It was inscribed: "For gold I give thee brass."<sup>1</sup>

The witnesses are legion to the strong influence which Mr. Beecher's preaching of the truth of God's Fatherhood, had exercised over their minds. Our age has been affluent in great or famous preachers—Dean Stanley, Canon Liddon, Norman McLeod, Joseph Parker, Professor Park, Professor Phelps, Père Hyacinthe, Dr. Bushnell, John Hall, Dr. Collyer, Dr. Parkhurst, E. H. Chapin, Mr. Punshon, Bersier, Bishop Simpson, the elder Tyng, Archdeacon Farrar, George Dana Boardman, William M. Taylor, De Witt Talmage, Bishop Huntington, Theodore L. Cuyler, Richard S. Storrs, Alexander McLaren, and many besides. An elaborate comparison and contrast with each one of these would show their superiority to Henry Ward Beecher, each in some particular excellence, while it would leave his preëminence untouched.

The late Phillips Brooks, the greatest of American preachers since the sods of Greenwood received the body of one greater still, might be brought into instructive comparison with Henry Ward Beecher. The pastor of Trinity Church, Boston, was in some respects a more attractive figure than the pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn. He shared largely in Mr. Beecher's broad humanity of spirit. In him thought and life, intellectual insight and spiritual insight, were marvelously commingled. One has truly said: "It was his happy gift to predominate like the sun in light and heat." Never having passed through the trials and

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher's Personality," John R. Howard, p. 158.

shadows of Mr. Beecher's life, and possessing a certain dignity and moral loneliness which Mr. Beecher never had, Phillips Brooks gained a hold on the confidence and love of many of the more highly educated minds of the American people, to an unparalleled degree. Though occupying a theological position more advanced than Mr. Beecher's, he preached so wisely and positively the grand Gospel which he believed, that he never excited the wide theological opposition which made Plymouth pulpit for many years a storm-center.

And yet it must be acknowledged that Mr. Beecher was the grandest single force ever given to the American pulpit. In Phillips Brooks there is a higher and steadier average of spiritual tone, but it was not given to him to rise to Beecher's loftiest heights of inspiration. Mr. Beecher touched human life, like Shakespeare, at almost every point. He was a man of the people, a man among common men, as Phillips Brooks was not. Like Lincoln, he had the experience of a life of poverty and hardship. He possessed that humor and pathos which moved the common heart. He was a magnificent force in moral reform, a great editor and author, and takes rank with our chief statesmen in his influence over political action. Mr. Beecher's sermons have an endless freshness and variety. When Phillips Brooks was going to preach in Westminster Abbey, a friend once asked him what sermon he was about to deliver, and he replied: "Sermon? I have but one." By this he meant that his message, his peculiar message, his personal contribution to the spiritual forces of his time, was along only one line. What this was it is not difficult to discover. It was a marvelous dis-

closure of the possibilities of human life, because man is God's son, because God is man's loving Father.

Writing of Mr. Beecher, Prof. George B. Willcox once said: "I suppose that is true of him as a pulpit orator which never has been true before of any other preacher in this country, and, after his departure, it will never be true again. It is this: if, in any company of intelligent persons, you should speak of the foremost preacher on this continent without mentioning his name, nine persons in every ten would know whom you meant."<sup>1</sup>

Abraham Lincoln, Dean Stanley, Mr. Spurgeon, Dr. Allon, and many others have remarked the Shakespearean quality of Mr. Beecher's intellect, its absorbing and transforming power, its vast range and versatility, its spontaneity, its comprehensiveness, the mysterious electrical force that flashes the light of imagination over common things. Dr. Armitage wrote of him: "His sermons exhibit a larger reading of human nature, a broader use of philosophical inquiry, a fresher application of Gospel truths, a clearer induction of common sense, and a more independent rectitude, than has fallen to the lot of any modern preacher." "My sober impression," said Dr. Parker, "is that Mr. Beecher could preach every Sunday in the year from the first verse in Genesis, without giving any sign of intellectual exhaustion or any failure of imaginative force."<sup>2</sup>

His preaching had a quality so distinct and original that it cannot be easily classed with that of any other master of pulpit eloquence. It had the peculiarities

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 388.   <sup>2</sup> "Life," p. 299.

of his nature in so marked a degree that he who thoroughly knows the Beecher sermon knows Henry Ward Beecher. His whole manhood went into his preaching, his spiritual life, his sense of God's love, his mental nimbleness, his large view of things, his worship of Christ, his passion for righteousness, his passion for souls, his broad humanity, his observations of nature, his practical philosophy, his powers of analysis and of comparison, his observations of human life, his prolific imagination, his memories of childhood, his recollections of Europe, the incidents of his anti-slavery history, his great heart-experiences, his sorrows, his consolations in grief, his study of the Scriptures, his knowledge of contemporary events in National and political life, his wit, his often grotesque humor, his tenderness toward the wayward and suffering, his delight in little children, in flowers, in pictures, and in jewels.

His preaching centered in the great truths of God's love revealed in the suffering Christ, who was God manifest in the flesh. Grace Greenwood writes that coming out of Plymouth Church: "The sun was always shining for me whatever the weather."<sup>1</sup> Men heard him not as a dying man to dying men but, as Dr. Holmes has said, "as a living man to living men."

The great-hearted temperance reformer, Mr. Francis Murphy, who has brought the power of love so mightily to the sorely-tempted and fallen, writes:

"I think it one of the greatest blessings of my life that I have had the pleasure of a personal acquaint-

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 43.

ance with the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. I have met him frequently and have spoken on the same platform with him. His loving, tender, Christlike ministry has been a constant inspiration and blessing to me. He introduced the World's Redeemer to publicans and sinners. His beautiful pictures of the infinite love of Jesus Christ were so much stronger than the power of sin that people willingly accepted of the Gospel of redeeming love. I remember him as a great light. His words were like drops of gentle rain. Wherever he was, it was summer. All nature was filled with the beauty of God. He was like a great tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf shall not wither. He is not dead. He lives. He speaks. He comforts. He blesses. He gives courage and hope to despairing ones. His memory is fragrant with the odors of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Though few men ever suffered as he did, yet he had large recompense in the knowledge that he had healed broken hearts and lifted troubled souls into the realms of peace. "If I should die to-morrow, you could not take it from me. I have lived, and what I have done will stand." "In Mr. Beecher's hands," it has been said, "the sermon never affrighted men, never froze men, never repelled men."<sup>2</sup>

People sometimes said that his sermons made them feel as if they had been fed, and warmed, and clothed. In both temporary and permanent effects, no ministry has ever been more conspicuous, wider, and, in some respects, more wholesome, than Henry Ward Beecher's. He had an enthusiasm, not for systems

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Letter, June 13, 1893.

of truth, but for men. He looked on truth not as a sword to be polished, and kept free from heretica stain, so much as a weapon by which to smite sin, and a tool to be used in the upbuilding of manhood. He had a deeper insight into the human heart than into speculative theology. He set forth the truth of the Gospel, not so much by learning and logic, as by a life blazing with the spirit of religion, and a mind filled with the three reverences of which Goethe speaks: "For what is above us, for our equals, for what is beneath us."

He was emphatically a fisher of men. Every listener felt, "He means me." He cast his hook with great dexterity. His eagerness to catch men was as intense as that passion for fishing which led his father, when a boy, to sit by the branch throughout training day, and far into the night, reluctant to go until the bullheads stopped biting. To reach the heart, conscience, and life, Mr. Beecher was bold to use every means and faculty which God had given him—imagination, indignation, pathos, rebuke. good-natured humor, stinging wit, and a Niagara of thunderous and passionate appeals.

Few men were ever so open to divine influences. He had all the requisites of the great preacher, and all of them in superabundant force and fulness. He loved God and his fellow men. Love was the sovereign element of his soul, ruling all his faculties and inspiring them. He had the prophet's power and the prophet's susceptibility. What he saw and felt he could transform instantly into speech often more effective and telling than that elaborated by other men with painstaking care.

The great constituency of eager minds whom he reached in many lands was made possible by the newspaper and book publishers and by the skillful reports of his trusted stenographer, Mr. T. J. Ellinwood. "On the borders of Puget Sound, in 1874, I met a former parishioner of his from Indianapolis. I said to him, 'Well, what do you think of your old pastor now?' He put his hand in his pocket, pulled out two or three copies of 'Plymouth Pulpit' and answered, 'What does that look like?' Soon after this I met a man way up on the Snake River. His home was in Idaho. I asked him about his church privileges. 'Oh,' said he, 'we have no churches up there on the Palouse, but a few of us get together and read "Plymouth Pulpit" and we have pretty good preaching I tell you.'"<sup>1</sup>

"While in Auckland, New Zealand, I had occasion to go into a book-store, and among the first things I saw upon the counter were the sermons of Plymouth Pulpit. . . . Near the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives, there is an old olive-tree; the guide or dragoman will tell you that it is known as 'Beecher.' I know of scarcely a paper or book of note, throughout the nations of the world in which my wanderings have led me, of high repute, in which I have not seen his sayings quoted and his sermons reported." "The greatest preacher on this planet," as Robert Collyer called him, "reached through the press," as another has said, "members of a congregation which St. Peter's could not have held had it been twenty times as large."

<sup>1</sup> Rev. A. H. Bradford, D.D., "Life," p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Phillips, "Beecher Memorial," p. 92.

Even if he does not enter into an analysis of his powers, the student should remember that Mr. Beecher magnified his office, that he cherished the highest estimate of the glory of preaching. Before the Board of London Congregational Ministers in 1886, he gave this testimony: "I suppose I have had as many opportunities as any man here or any living man, for what are called honors and influence and wealth. The doors have been open, the golden doors, for years. I want to bear witness that the humblest labor which a minister of God can do for a soul, for Christ's sake, is grander and nobler than all learning, than all influence and power, than all riches."<sup>1</sup> Or, as he said of the Christian ministry at the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in 1873, in the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, New York: "It is the 'sweetest in its substance, the most enduring in its choice, the most content in its poverty and limits, if your lot is cast in places of scarcity, more full of crowned hopes, more full of whispering messages from those gone before, nearer to the threshold, nearer to the throne, nearer to the brain, to the heart that was pierced, but that lives for ever and says, 'Because I live ye shall live also.'"

It was Mr. Beecher's tremendous personal experiences that helped to give his preaching such a living and life-giving power. His words were vital with the life of God that throbbed through his great heart. He knew that, although more than most preachers he himself preached Christian ethics, the preacher's chief strength comes from God. "Abiding in the

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," pp. 615-616.



Infinite and Eternal prepares one," he said, "to bring to the task of preaching something more than analytical power, than secular narrowness."

It was not his sermons alone that touched with new life the multitudes that ever thronged to hear him. His prayers were a preparation for the preaching. "His sermons touched me like shocks from a spiritual battery, but his prayers were like the very breathing of the Spirit of God. . . . I think few men have been able so to open the window of heaven and talk with God face to face. Few ministers have been able to make their congregations feel that the very heavens were raining mercy upon their bowed heads."<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly one of the chief elements of his power in the pulpit was his thorough acquaintance with men and his eminent ability to project himself into other people's lives, analyzing their motives and their troubles and showing himself the wise physician of the human soul. Mr. Halliday said: "While scarcely any pastoral work is performed by him, yet his sermons manifest a most intimate knowledge of his people's spiritual condition." Though a man of strong emotions and gifted with large dramatic sense, he moved on men through the conscience before he appealed to emotion and sentiment.

"His sermons," as Lyman Abbot has said, "are philosophical in their cast and make-up." This is certainly true of many of them, especially in the beginning, but, as his heart warms and his imagination kindles, he becomes more practical, experimental,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Albert H. Heath, . . .

He "p. 356.

illustrative, and hortatory. He was a pioneer among preachers who have learned to bring truth down to date, and, instead of bombarding antiquity and preaching against sin in general or making it hot for the antediluvians, he shot forth his arrows in the day of battle against present foes. He gained a great advantage over most men in preaching, because he had a definite method of analysis. He divided character into elements. Whether the division was philosophical or not, it furnished him a vast homiletic advantage. Instead of declaiming against a cloud-bank called sin, he drew a strong bow on certain tigers, wolves, hyenas, and swine that are always prowling and growling within the human spirit.

A number of students from Union Theological Seminary were present one evening in Plymouth Church, in April, 1875, and Mr. Beecher contrasted the theological examination which young ministers passed through, in which they told about what they had learned of Creation and Adam's Fall, and the Flood and Moses, with the questions he would put to them in order to make ministers fit for the time. "Do you know how I would proceed if I had the training and examining of these young men? I would ask them what they knew of the daily papers. I would ask them what they think of the lizards that make up the New York City Council."<sup>1</sup>

All men know how marvelous was Mr. Beecher's power of illustration. Dr. E. P. Ingersoll, of Brooklyn, said—"His mind is analogical rather than logical." His illustrations are taken from almost every

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Frank Russell, D.D., "Life," p. 372.

subject and object which his mind and eye ever beheld—from his father, mother, aunt, teachers, the farm, the orchard, the garden; from all the processes of nature and husbandry; from flowers, trees, summer, winter, autumn, spring, the barn, the barn-yard, the harvest-field, the horses, dogs, and swine; from the mountain streams, the clouds, the sky, the sun; from history, literature, theological writers, all the processes of manufacturing, book-making, cloth-making, paper-making; from all the phenomena of light, the gray morning, the evening glories, the silent and shining stars. Illustrations that make the reader laugh abound. In this he followed the great preachers of the Middle Ages, and also the habit of Luther and some of the greater reformers. "Does vice, then," said Lessing, "deserve so much respect that a Christian may not laugh at it?"

One characteristic of the Beecher sermon is its originality. He was a wise student of other men's opinions, but he revolved and recast all that entered his mind, and when it came out in words it had a stamp as clear-cut as Carlyle's or De Quincey's. He enjoyed being in the vanguard. The elation of the explorer was his. His daring genius may have led him into speculations that were mere guesses, but even his mistakes are instructive. If anybody had put to him the question that was put to Socrates, as reported by Plato in the "Gorgias,"—"Do you not think you are refuted when you say what no other man would say?"—he might have answered that it was each man's privilege to see and say things as God gave him vision and understanding.

Whatever may be *thought* of Mr. Beecher's later

doctrinal views, it must be said that his theology was always a working theology, something which he could preach. Sharing so fully in the life of his time, putting himself into the intellectual position of those without the Church, he was able, with singular skill, to meet their difficulties. Hon. Andrew D. White has said: "Some of his theological statements seemed to me really inspired. He seemed to have a deep insight into the great truths of religion and to be able to present them to others, opening up at times great new vistas of truth by a single flash."

He believed that Christianity is represented by the sum of all the sects, not by any one of them. Hence those who value most in a sermon conformity to their own theological and ecclesiastical views, will not always be pleased with the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher. He looked upon the Church and its organization and ordinances, and upon truth itself, as means to the great end of building up Christian manhood. He said: "I immerse, I sprinkle, and I have in some instances poured, and I never saw that there was any difference in the Christianity that was made." He believed that God had given him a great work to do, especially in his last years, in bringing the Church into harmony with the conclusions of modern investigation. He declared himself in 1885 to be in the fullest sympathy with revivals and revival work. It is important that this should be remembered by those who were troubled by some of his utterances and feared that in his devotion to evolution he had left the old evangelic foundations.

Of no man since Paul can it be said more truly than of Mr. Beecher, that with his whole heart he

preached Christ. Not one of the kings of the pulpit has been a more rapturous devotee of Christ. Christ was his God, his Redeemer, his Friend. So absolute was his worship of Christ and devotion to Him that he never for an instant cherished the thought of ranking Him with the greatest of the sons of men. The heart of Christ was the Divine heart on which he leaned. The sayings of Christ were the germs of all heavenly wisdom, and he would no more have thought of comparing the greatest sermons of Jeremy Taylor and Chalmers, or the greatest speeches of Demosthenes and Burke, with Christ's Sermon on the Mount, than we would have compared the fine jewelry of a king's diadem with the unwasting stellar fires of the Milky Way.

He realized that whatever excellence he attained in preaching was only fragmentary. He knew that in order to preach, a man must have native gifts and aptitudes—physical, intellectual, and spiritual; he must not be lacking either in enthusiasm or in judgment, in discipline or in feeling, in training or in spontaneity; he must have communion with God and community of spirit with men; and he realized that, however greatly he had been gifted and blessed, his utterances were vastly imperfect. He had a glimpse of the glory and possibility of preaching which he, himself, never reached. "There have often been times when I would have given all the world if I could have gone into the pulpit and told what I felt and not simply what I thought. I have had moods when writing as well as when reading that I could not describe. I have had states in care and trouble when I was lifted above troubles and

cares, and when I saw things so serenely beautiful, that nothing would have been too much to give if I could make other people see them so; but I could not. I think I know what Paul meant when he said he went into the seventh heaven, and saw things that were not lawful—in other words, that it was not possible to utter.”<sup>1</sup>

No one knows Henry Ward Beecher who has not felt how completely loyal he was to Jesus Christ. “No man,” said Dr. Allon, “has more fully or fervently preached Christ as the Divine Son of God.” His theological vagaries, the bold flights of his imagination and speculation, never carried him away from Christ. He said that the hymn which he wished to have sung at the last service over his body was:

“When I survey the wondrous Cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.”

Mrs. Stowe said of him: “He has been a student of Huxley, Spencer, and Darwin, enough to alarm the old school, and yet remained so ardent a supernaturalist as equally to repel the radicals and destructionists in religion. He and I are Christ-worshippers, adoring Him as the image of the invisible God.”<sup>2</sup> He once said: “There is no flower in all the field that owes so much to the sun as I do to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Undoubtedly much of the popular interest excited

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<sup>1</sup> From Mr. T. J. Ellinwood's "Reminiscences."

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Mrs. Stowe," p. 477.

by his preaching in later years, came from his vigorous onslaughts upon offending dogmas. Others have noted the fact that he often set up men of straw, but he attacked them as if they were steel-clad knights. His soul was so full of faith in the living Christ that he had no sympathy with the fears of men who imagine that, when their theories of the Bible are shaken, the Kingdom of God is in peril. He said of the Bible: "It is the most betrayed book in the world. Coming to it through commentaries, is much like looking at a landscape through garret windows o'er which generations of unmolested spiders have spun their webs." "You may sink the Bible to the bottom of the ocean, and man's obligations to God will be unchanged." This is undoubtedly true, and yet was not this truth in peril of reaching some minds in such a way that they suspected Mr. Beecher's willingness to sink the Bible into the sea?

Most men know that it was Mr. Beecher's custom usually to preach, not from a written manuscript, but from a more or less full outline, from which, however, he frequently departed. The following is a copy of an outline from which he preached Sunday evening, December 7, 1875:

- I. Repentance, *is such a sense of evil as inspires one to turn from it.* In single particulars.
  1. It happens in wordly things every day.
  2. It is common *to social life.*
- II. It may include a whole *line of* conduct, rather than a single action.
- III. It may have respect *to one's whole career and character.*
- IV. In all cases—two *elements.*

1. *Avulsion from sin or evil.*

2. *Turning to good.*

This last of supreme practical importance.

The shadow of grain destroys most of weeds—

Right action the method of correcting bad—

There must be an outlet to *mental forces*. If stopped in one direction, should open in another.

*Dan. 4: 27.* Break off thy sins by righteousness.

V. Men need help,

1. From fellow men,

2. From surrounding circumstances,

3. Especially from *Spirit of God*.

I. Men *may* make repentance of *minor* sins, a shield for greater. Right so far, but wrong in whole.

II. Men hide from selves the extent of sin, the need of repentance, the evil and danger of course, self-flattery.

III. Superficial repentance.

IV. Repentance *not followed up and* confirmed, emotion not action.

V. Solemn appeal to all whether in conduct, habits, character. Ought not to go higher?

VI. K of H [Kingdom of Heaven] is near to many of you!<sup>1</sup>

“In his sermons,” says a writer in *The Nation*, “there is no evidence of carelessness; there is in each a complete plan steadfastly held to from beginning to end.” He was all the while preparing his sermons, reading whenever he had a spare moment, visiting workshops, observing men, but rarely deciding what sermon he would preach until Sunday morning. One preparation for Sunday was doing nothing on Saturday that required exhausting thought. He was found resting at Peekskill, gazing in the shop windows, diverting his mind by looking at the gems at Tiffany’s,

<sup>1</sup> Kindly given by Rev. S. B. Halliday.



taking good sleep, spending the evening with his family or friends.

Sunday morning he was happy, cheerful, abstemious, somewhat absorbed. He was soon locked in his room, not to be disturbed, and there he sketched in large outline his sermon. "As the bell rang for the last time, about fifteen minutes before the opening of the service, he would come out, his papers thrown hastily together, held in his hand or thrust in his coat-pocket, and with scarcely a word to any one, put on his hat, take Mrs. Beecher on his arm, and start for church."<sup>1</sup>

He sometimes changed his topic after entering the pulpit. The music, the Scriptural reading, the prayer, usually fed his own soul and prepared him for that hour in which he enchained the attention of men with the truth of God.

He was a constant student in his own way, and believed with Chrysostom, that study is even more indispensable for the eloquent than for the ordinary preacher. "Variety, vivacity, and velocity of appeal" are mentioned by Dr. Storrs as essentials to the great modern sermon, and there was no lack of these qualities in the preaching of Henry Ward Beecher.

Much as he made fun of theologians and commentators, he studied both and valued both. His son-in-law, Rev. Samuel Scoville, was astonished at "the evidences found in note-books and books of analysis of his broad and painstaking study of the Gospels." He carried Stanley's Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians for weeks in his carpet-bag, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Biography," p. 599.

studied and notated it from beginning to end. Scores of little note-books were filled with his thoughts, points for sermons, etc. "A singular feature of his productive power," writes Mr. R. W. Raymond, "was that it seldom lasted more than a couple of hours." He seemed to be under the control of his genius. His mind worked under certain laws which he well learned. "I am *brooding* my Thanksgiving sermon," he wrote in 1852, "but the chickens will not yet run out from under the wing." "He had three distinct mental states, the passive or resting, the receptive and inquiring or filling up, and the spontaneously active or giving-forth state."<sup>1</sup>

The tide of life was strong in him, but it was not always at the full. As with some of the great poets, there was a marked periodicity in his mental productiveness. He seemed to know when he must rest. He recognized the value of sleep. The flowers of his imagination and reason would often come to miraculous brilliancy by a sudden burst of creative force and then the orchard of his mind would refuse for a while to put forth any further blossoms. In creative work he was a man of moods. He often said: "I cannot work unless the sap flows." But he was always industriously filling in or getting his accumulations into shape, vitalizing them with conscious and unconscious thought.

He was not one of the artistic preachers "who work literary miracles on paper." Preaching with him was too earnest and practical a business for him to attempt such wonders. His miracles are numerous enough,

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 657.

but they are like those of the May sunshine, startling the earth with violets. However lofty his idealism and eagle-winged his flights of imagination, there is always a healthy and strong foundation of sturdy common sense which may be truly called a general characteristic of his preaching.

It must not be forgotten that his Church helped to make him eloquent and powerful. With that great and generous congregation back of him, he had the means of crystallizing his generous ideas into generous deeds. He could not only point out the lessons of the Chicago Fire, but he could secure on one Sunday morning from his people a gift of five thousand dollars for the Chicago sufferers. The wholesomeness of Mr. Beecher's preaching is its close practical connection with all human life. He was always a preacher. Whether writing editorials, or speaking against slavery, or lecturing on the burdens of society; whether we find him in the White Mountains, where for years he sought rest from hay fever, or journeying with the Brooklyn Thirteenth Regiment, whose chaplain he became in 1878, it is the great-hearted preacher who comes before us and speaks to us with powers so wonderful that "it is scarcely more necessary to certify to them," as Senator Conkling once said, "than to certify to the light of the sun."

And, then, Mr. Beecher spake in words which went to the universal heart. The people heard him gladly and read him gratefully, and will read him for many years to come. What he, himself, thought of literary style and practiced as well, is suggested by a remark in one of his Yale Lectures, where he contrasts John Bunyan and Dr. Johnson. It indicates his preference

for Saxon words and homely idioms. "Bunyan is to-day like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither. Johnson, with all his glory, lies like an Egyptian king, buried and forgotten in the pyramid of his fame."

He thought "great sermons" a temptation of the devil. He had no great sermons reserved for special occasions, and yet in the course of his ministry there came times when even those who heard him constantly were overwhelmed with astonishment by the grandeur and power of his utterance.

Mr. Beecher needs to be read largely in order to be understood adequately, and yet the following sermons may be named as giving an idea of the variety, force, adaptation, and occasional sublimity of his pulpit speech: *The Sepulchre in the Garden*, *The Communion of Saints*, *The Courtesy of Conscience*, *What is Christ to Me?* *The Primacy of Love*, *The Christian Life a Struggle*.

Dr. Bushnell affected many thoughtful minds more powerfully than Beecher, but looking at the full breadth of his influence, especially over the younger ministry, noting how widely his themes and lines of thought are reproduced in the general preaching of the day, we see that to Mr. Beecher, rather than to Dr. Bushnell, belongs Professor Hoppin's designation of "Epoch-making." He has been likened, by the Rev. Dr. Hillis, to a man, who, crossing a continent, scattered his thoughts, like handfuls of seeds, everywhere. The harvests are now appearing.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

"SECURUS JUDICAT ORBIS TERRARUM."

HENRY WARD BEECHER'S death was mourned, not only wherever the English language is spoken, but by the great men of France and throughout Germany, where, as Baron Tauchnitz wrote, "His memory will endure among the great and good of all lands."

On the 24th of June, 1891, his statue, by John Quincy Adams Ward, was unveiled in front of the Brooklyn City Hall. Thirty-five thousand dollars had been contributed by the friends of the great man—men, women, and children of all creeds and nationalities. It was unveiled by his granddaughter, Gertrude Roxana Beecher. Prayer was offered by the Rev. S. B. Halliday. Rev. Charles H. Hall, D.D., of Trinity Episcopal Church, introduced Mayor Chapin, who presided on the occasion. Three hundred children, from the Sunday-schools of Plymouth Church and of the Bethel and Mayflower Missions, sang Mr. Beecher's favorite hymn,

"Love divine, all love excelling,"

accompanied by the band of the Thirteenth Regiment. After a portion of <sup>the</sup> Beethoven's Fifth Sym-

phony, so beloved by Mr. Beecher, had been played, President Seth Low, of Columbia College, made an address, and after the singing of "America," Rabbi Gottheil, of New York, pronounced the closing benediction.

On a pedestal of dark Quincy granite, designed by the great architect, Richard M. Hunt, rises the statue of Mr. Beecher, of heroic size, and representing him as a man of great courage and sympathy. Mr. Beecher stands with overcoat on, and his soft felt hat in hand, as if he had stopped for a moment in a walk, or was about to address an out-door assemblage. On the pedestal is the figure of a negro girl raising a branch of palm to show the gratitude of her people. There are also two other graceful figures representing two white children, a boy seated and endeavoring to support the figure of a girl, who is trying to push a garland up to the plinth.

What will live of Henry Ward Beecher? Most of all, his life and work. He was a man of action. What he did, backed by what he was, makes him one of the heroes of history. Most men know little of Luther's writings, but Luther confronting the Diet of Worms is the most splendid figure of the sixteenth century. Henry Ward Beecher, fifty years hence, will be a name to conjure by, like Luther and Wesley, Hampden and Chatham. Peter McCleod, of Glasgow, said: "Had Mr. Beecher only come to England two years sooner, there would have been little sympathy in Britain for the slave-holding South." Joseph Cook said, "I suppose he drove Louis Napoleon out of Mexico by that series of lectures. It is certain that he did as much as any other one American to

prevent a recognition of the Southern Confederacy by the British Government."<sup>1</sup>

"Could his compatriots know what Mr. Beecher did for America in that unparalleled campaign, no marble in Carrara would be too fine for them to buy and carve, that his bust, classical in an artistic eye, might fill the proudest niche in the proudest temple of his country."<sup>2</sup>

"It was a fitting recognition of his services in England," as President Hayes has said, "that Henry Ward Beecher should replace upon Fort Sumter the flag which disunion and slavery had pulled down."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Beecher was the greatest spokesman in our generation for the spirit of humanity. Great varieties of character and genius were wrapped up in this one soul. Rev. H. R. Haweis wrote in *The Contemporary Review*, in 1872: "It would be no compliment to call Henry Ward Beecher the American Spurgeon. He may be that, but he is more. If we can imagine Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. John Bright, with a cautious touch of Mr. Maurice and a strong tincture of the late F. W. Robertson,—if, I say,—it is possible to imagine such a compound being, brought up in New England and at last securely fixed in a New York pulpit, we shall get a product not unlike Henry Ward Beecher." And yet it would not be Henry Ward Beecher.

There was that in him as divinely original as anything in Shakespeare. There is a peculiar quality in his thought, and there was a peculiar power in his

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<sup>1</sup> "Boston Monday Lectures, 1888," p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> "Parker's Eulogy," p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Beecher "Memorial," p. 19.

presence and words that belonged to him alone. His magnetic, flaming, positive nature affected men in such diverse ways, striking them at such different angles, that they became usually his warm friends or his bitter enemies. Probably he shared more largely than any other the honor, which came to his Master, of being the best abused man of his time. In Liverpool he was stigmatized as "The Clown Preacher," "The Arch-Insurrectionist," "The Nigger Worshiper," "The Free-Love Monster"; by his people he was adored almost as a demigod, certainly as an inspired prophet. So far as character is concerned, men should be in a measure judged by the impression which their personality makes on prejudiced but frank and honest minds. Many ministers went to the Brooklyn Council in 1876, unsettled in their opinions and troubled at heart. "But I left the Council," wrote Rev. Francis N. Zabriskie, D.D., "firmly persuaded (as were all who attended) that Henry Ward Beecher was not only unjustly accused, but that he was one of the noblest and, in this matter, one of the saintliest souls which the grace of Christ had moved and moulded."<sup>1</sup>

An admirer of Mr. Beecher's, a leading business man of Chicago. Mr. A. C. Bartlett, relates that, conversing one Sunday morning with a lady who believed all sorts of crimes had been committed by the pastor of Plymouth Church, he requested her to go to Central Music Hall, where he thought Mr. Beecher, who was in town, would attend the preaching services of Prof. David Swing, and where, it seemed to him very likely Mr. Beecher would be called upon to offer

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 364.



prayer. His expectations were fulfilled in every particular. Her prejudiced ladyship was there, and came under the influence of that great personality who seemed to have a firmer hold on the tenderness of God than any other follower of Christ since the death of the Beloved Disciple. From that time on, to at least one of his enemies, Mr. Beecher was a good man.

As to the fertility of Mr. Beecher's mind, there is but one opinion. "For full fifty years," says Edward Pierrepont, "he talked to the public, and no man said so much, and repeated himself so little." Dr. Mark Hopkins, who was a wise judge of greatness, has written: "No such instance of prolonged steady power at one point, in connection with other labors so extended and diversified, and magnificent in results, has ever been known."<sup>1</sup>

Of Mr. Beecher's oratorical genius there is, and will be, no divided opinion. Without the high breeding of Phillips in oratory, and of Lowell and Higginson in literature, he surpasses them in warmth and breadth. No other man of his time had quite the range of Mr. Beecher's vocal powers at their best. He who could thunder could whisper. Schiller said: "Divide up the thunder into separate notes, and it becomes a lullaby for children, but pour it forth in one continuous peal, and its royal sound will shake the heavens." Mr. Beecher could divide the thunder at any instant, and change its trumpet peals into lullabies. Tears and laughter, pathos and humor, were close together, and often intermingled in his preaching, as in the grave-digger scene from "Hamlet."

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 58.

Speaking of Mr. Beecher's advocacy of the Union cause in England, Dr. Mark Hopkins said: "Probably the world has seen no grander instance of the ascendancy of eloquence and of the personal power of a single man, and he a foreigner, in the face of prejudiced and excited mobs."<sup>1</sup>

The National mind, at its greatest epoch, found its fullest, most powerful, and perfect expression in the words of Lincoln, Emerson, Lowell, Whittier, Phillips, Beecher, and Mrs. Stowe. "He was essentially a National man, grasping all the thoughts and feelings of a Continent."<sup>2</sup>

Prof. Roswell D. Hitchcock, who frequently occupied Mr. Beecher's pulpit, and who said: "If the real tone and temper of a minister may be inferred from the tone and temper of his people, I have abundant reason to think well of the Plymouth preacher and pastor," has recorded his admiration of Mr. Beecher's sturdy patriotism. "Of the old Puritan stock, he was an American through and through, and out and out. He had no European affectations—French, Anglican, German or any other. He recognized in our National history a new democratic evangel. In his opinion, not Plymouth Rock only, but Liberty itself was struck by the shots that were fired on Sumter. Outside of the Army, outside of the Government, no Northern man did more than he for the Northern cause."<sup>3</sup>

But, though thoroughly American, and perhaps for that very reason, Mr. Beecher has been cordially

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<sup>1</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> General Sherman, "Beecher Memorial," p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Beecher Memorial," p. 73.

adopted in Great Britain. Newman Hall has called him "a link of brotherhood between the two countries"; and though he was compelled to speak some strong words in condemnation of the English ruling classes, he was always more than half in love with the mother land. On his last visit to England he said of her: "Through light and dark, through good and through evil, she has proved herself to be the right hand of the Almighty God for light, for liberty, and for victory."

Many men, naturally disposed to think highly of Mr. Beecher's genius, have been strongly repelled by what they deem his theological eccentricities. The perusal of this volume it is hoped will show some of these that Henry Ward Beecher was thoroughly sound at heart. "Whatever the eccentricities of his career and of his mind, the centrifugal force," as Dr. Leonard Bacon has said, "was checked, and the star held in its orbit by the attraction of the Sun of Righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

Before his doctrinal errancies are too severely condemned they should be accurately estimated. He was a preacher of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and a vigorous antagonist of many views which did not seem to him true and certainly are not the common property and inheritance of the catholic Church. His preaching of retribution may not have been adequate, but it was effective of its kind. When retribution is preached with great definiteness as to place and time and mode, it is in peril of becoming incredible.

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<sup>1</sup> "Life," p. 361.

Mr. Beecher must be judged by his temperament, his philosophy, and by his main purpose, which was to build up Christian manhood. He believed in everything that would help to make the whole life religious and holy. "I do not believe a child brought up under my ministry in this Church will ever see flowers till he dies, without having some thought of religion, of the sanctuary."<sup>1</sup>

In 1878 and 1879 he gave a series of Sunday-evening talks about the early books of the Old Testament, lectures designed to free the interpretation of the Word of God from superstition and to bring the Bible back into the atmosphere in which it was born. He believed that the more intelligent the knowledge of the Scriptures, the sweeter they will be to the soul. Doubtless he would have been saved from many over-statements if he had not been gifted with such marvelous spontaneity of utterance, and had been compelled to write laboriously his matured thought. He had almost a fatal facility for preaching.

The story of his life must give to many hearts a new sense of the delightsomeness and glory of a life dedicated to the highest things. Full of abounding labors for others, above most men he knew what it was to find in toil the highest liberty, the greatest cheer, the most abounding fruitfulness and remuneration. He once said: "That is not work alone that brings sweat to the brow. Work may be light, unburdensome, as full of song as the merry brook that turns the miller's wheel; but no wheel is ever

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<sup>1</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, April, 1893.

turned without the rush and weight of the stream upon it."

He felt with Emerson that it is the duty of the preacher to bring cheering and invigorating messages to his fellow men. "One of the most important fruits of his ministry," as Chancellor Sims, of the Syracuse University, has said, "is the influence of his preaching upon other ministers; to them all over the world he has been an inspiration and an interpreter of spiritual truth."

He was one of the many streams of influence that helped to wash away the roughness of the old New England orthodoxy. Unitarianism, which carried truth in the bosom of its errors, was a movement which, though lacking important elements, greatly modified the creeds and preaching of the Evangelical pulpit. It aided in restoring the balance to Christian truth which leaned too decidedly to high Calvinism with its undue depression of man, its intellectual dogmatism, and its hiding of the Fatherhood of God.

Another stream of modifying influence came from Methodism. New England was cold intellectualism; Methodism was fervent heart-power. New England emphasized the convictions; Methodism, the emotions. The revival movements which Wesley and Whitfield led reached the Atlantic seaboard of America and kindled new fires in later years, when Nettleton, Lyman Beecher, and Finney, imbued with the zeal of missionaries and apostles, awoke slumbering Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, and gave to preaching fresh fervor and greater directness. For some time John Calvin has been sitting at the feet of John Wesley.

Furthermore, the Providence of God, in the events and changes of National life in America, has modified to some extent the methods and agencies of Christian teaching. The preacher no longer occupies the same relative position in the social organization. Lyman Beecher, in 1812, was a member of the Standing Ecclesiastical Order of Connecticut, an established Church—Congregational not Episcopalian. The downfall of that order, which he resisted, but afterwards declared to be the best thing that ever happened to the Church, led the way to the readjustment of the preacher's place in society. Henry Ward Beecher was simply a citizen of Brooklyn whom two thousand and more independent persons voluntarily supported, and who by his genius enlarged his congregation to the bounds of the English-speaking world. Still further, the Church in our time has been providentially called to face the great evils of social and political life. Lyman Beecher himself was a fearful innovator when, in his famous sermons on intemperance, he rebuked the drinking customs of the clergy and the people, and encouraged Christian men to labor for a thorough and grander reformation. His son encountered greater opposition and accomplished greater results by his magnificent and long-continued arraignment of the monster crime of slavery.

Again, in God's Providence, New England has been taken up by the Divine hand and spread over the Continent. The little democratic villages of Massachusetts where the population was homogeneous and the minister was a State officer, have been greatly modified. The railroads have been mighty reformers.

New peoples have come to old neighborhoods. Instead of a uniform kindred population, the modern preacher deals with heterogeneous elements. Contrast the thousands who listened to Henry Ward Beecher, persons gathered from many nations, living in a great city, breathing an atmosphere quick with excitement, with ideas gathered from ten thousand sources, students in the great university of modern life, contrast them with a congregation assembled two hundred years ago in a Salem meeting-house, living by themselves, fighting Indians, discussing speculative theology, divided by social distinctions, as Gentleman and Good-man, called together by a horn-blower to whom each family paid a pound of pork, joining in psalms that were as melodious as an ancient hand-organ, and listening for two hours to a solemn divine in a Geneva cloak with black gloves "opened at the thumb and finger for the handling of the manuscript." Such a contrast will show, both how different must be the styles of preaching, and how the preacher himself is affected by the times in which he dwells.

Mr. Beecher was a representative as well as the leader of his age. He who, as David Dudley Field has said, spoke from more pulpits and platforms than any other man of his time, was the child as well as the maker of the epoch in which he lived.

Henry Ward Beecher will be longest remembered in connection with the Christian pulpit from the fact that, more than any other preacher who has ever lived, he made men feel the love of God. He had an abiding and all-pervading faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as God in the flesh, expressing to man the very

nature of God. He believed that such a Gospel as Christ taught would always bring cheer and hope to sinful men. He was careful not to slam the door in the face of any needy son of God. Among all the preachers of the world he was the hope-giver. He never left his hearers in the condition in which Parson Simpson's sermon left Mrs. Stowe's Sam Lawson, who reported it as follows: "Our state by nature is just like this, we was clar down in a well fifty feet deep, the sides all round nothin' but glare ice, but we're under immediate obligations to get out 'cause we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever has got out or would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em, but whether He would or not nobody could tell. It was all sovereignty. There is not one in ten thousand that would be saved. I felt kind of empty, as a body may say. Lord a' massy, said I to myself, if that is so, they are any of them welcome to my chance."

Dr. Armitage, of New York, clearly perceived that all of the greatness and goodness of Mr. Beecher, to whom he gave the first place among the preachers of his time, would be finally discovered after he was dead. He was one of those men "who connect the past with the future and make of themselves bridges for the passage of multitudes."<sup>1</sup>

He was not the founder of a sect. He probably had some sympathy with Lessing who said: "I hate from the bottom of my heart those who wish to found sects; it is not error of itself that makes the misfortune of men, but *sectarian* error, or even *sectarian truth*, were

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<sup>1</sup>Eggleston, "Beecher Memorial," p. 64.



it possible for the truth to form a sect!" Probably he was the greatest apostle of that coming Christian unity, which, without obliterating natural differences, shall yet usher in the Kingdom of True Brotherhood. He realized and taught, as few men in our times have taught, that in Jesus Christ this unity is found. "As I grow older, I come to feel as though the future results of my work will be out of all proportion to anything we see now. It is the expectation of the unknown results of the future that comforts me here. It is very easy for me to say this, because I have sight as well as faith."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Beecher, who was introduced to a Chicago audience by his brother William as "the greatest heretic of the age," will probably not be deemed so heretical by the next generation. "One New Year's Day," writes Mr. W. E. Davenport, of Brooklyn, "not earlier than 1884, I stopped at his house and found him conversing with callers. One of his acquaintances, noticing a finely executed bust of Lyman Beecher looked at it for a moment and then, turning to Mr. Beecher said, interrogatively: 'That is a likeness of your father?' 'Yes,' replied Mr. Beecher, and then meditatively, 'and it has often been a source of satisfaction to me to know that he was once up for trial on the charge of heresy. It has seemed to me that, in being thought somewhat unorthodox myself, I have simply been keeping in line with his spirit and the temper he would approve. Now, this Lyman Beecher is looked back to as a very model and pattern of orthodoxy, and his writings are appealed to as of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. T. J. Ellinwood's "Re-  
miniscences."

the safest and most conservative character; but there have been great changes since his day, and there are bound to be more, so that it would not be so much of a surprise if some future heresy-hunter, in times when theological thought has undergone further developments, should look back upon me as one of the main standbys of the old school, and quote passages out of my sermons in support of his orthodoxy, and say' (Here Mr. Beecher raised his voice and assumed quite a ministerial air): 'Hear what that illustrious Henry Ward Beecher, that celebrated authority of Congregationalism, says, and so make my words a barrier to all broader teaching.' All this, of course, Mr. Beecher said with a good-natured twinkle of the eyes that showed how fully he appreciated the absurdity of it under present circumstances and regarded so sad a misapprehension of him as a remote possibility."

When those who knew Mr. Beecher well get together and speak of him, they are often reminded of this or that scene in which he stands before them in some characteristic attitude. "I remember him," says one, "as he spoke a comforting word in his lecture-room talk, and seemed to know the deepest needs of my life." Another remembers him as he appeared surrounded by a group of ministers, eager to catch something from his lips that should reveal the sources of his power, and recalls how he said: "When I am talking with other folks, I often feel that I am nobody, but when I stand in my pulpit I sometimes feel omnipotent."

Another says: "I remember him as he stood before the Council of 1876, and described his experience

when fully grasping the horror of the conspiracy which threatened to destroy him, and he exclaimed in a voice which made every one shudder, 'I was like a man who, awakening at midnight, found himself in a menagerie of serpents.'

Another (Rev. James L. Hill, D. D., of Medford, Mass.) says: "I remember him as he stood in Pilgrim Hall in Boston shortly after his great trial. A large company of ministers, some of whom had been hostile, were gathered there, and the old man, the white locks making a halo of splendor around his head, prayed in that voice of melting pathos, and the tears came rolling down his checks as he brought the hearts of his friends and foes close to the heart of his merciful and adorable Saviour."

How much of Mr. Beecher's literary work will survive? A great deal of it has that peculiar quality, imagination, which Lowell calls "the great anti-septic." He is one of the most quotable of men, as quotable as Marcus Aurelius, Montaigne, Bacon, or Emerson. Five or six volumes from his sermons, speeches, and essays, would contain too much wit and wisdom for posterity to willingly let die. He had Franklin's and Lincoln's homely way of saying things, and much of Thomas à Kempis's spirituality and power of bringing consolation to bruised hearts. Poet, moralist, humorist, and master of pithy proverbs, why should not Mr. Beecher be among the immortals in literature? A hundred years hence, when the Republic has become "the most powerful and prosperous community ever devised or developed by man," and the historian reviews the critical years of the nineteenth cen-

ture, in which Mr. Beecher had so conspicuous a part, he will then be a larger and loftier figure than now.

There is no life of this century that is better worth studying than Henry Ward Beecher's. When men are a little further removed from it, they will know its greatness better. The coming generations will read his story, and find it the story of the epoch in which he lived. They will say: Here is the man who touched the life of his time at every point. He was a man of original power and of prophetic insight. He was a man most of whose nature was bathed in wholesome sunshine, and he taught that gloom and sickness are not synonymous with piety, and do not contribute to the noblest Christian manhood. He raised great multitudes of men to higher conceptions of true living. He broke the shackles of the pulpit, and was a pioneer in that new Christianity which covers the whole domain of life. Liberty fired his soul, and he spoke with the tongue of Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams. The Gospel entered into his very being, and he preached Christ with Paul's fervor, and with the affectionateness of the beloved Disciple. He found humanity manacled by traditionalism, and he helped to deliver it into a wider freedom. To the sensitive heart of a woman, he added a lion-like courage, and a Miltonic loftiness of spirit. He bore no malice toward men, and endured contumely as a good Soldier of the Cross. To the more than royal imagination of Jeremy Taylor, he added a zeal as warm as Whitfield's. In him the wit of Sidney Smith was combined with the common sense of John Bunyan. In the annals of oratory his place

is near that of Demosthenes. Among reformers he need fear no comparison with Wendell Phillips, John Bright, Mazzini, or Charles Sumner. In moral genius for statesmanship he was the brother of Abraham Lincoln, and, in the annals of the pulpit, he can only be mentioned with the greatest names—Chrysostom, Bernard, Luther, Wesley, Chalmers, Spurgeon. He was a noble builder in the Republic of God, the great Church of the Future.

Toiling with prodigious industry on earth, Mr. Beecher's heart was for long years in Heaven. There came to him visions brighter than those that cheered Christian and Hopeful from the Delectable Mountains. He went down into the deep river, trusting in the sure promises of God. Had he been able, in his last hours, to speak what was in his heart, he might well have spoken what Bunyan puts into the mouth of Mr. Valiant—for Truth as he went down into the dark waters. The passage from the great prose-poet of England, which General Hawley quoted when he announced the death of General Sherman to the Senate of the United States, may well linger in the minds of those who now, in this book, part company with Henry Ward Beecher.

“When he understood it (that his summons had come) he called to his friends and told them of it. ‘Then,’ said he, ‘I am going to my fathers; and though, with great difficulty I got hither, yet I do not repent me of the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him who shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him who can get them. My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have

fought His battles who will now be my Redeemer.' When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, 'Death where is thy sting?' and as he went down deeper he said, 'Grave where is thy victory?' So he passed over, AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE."

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